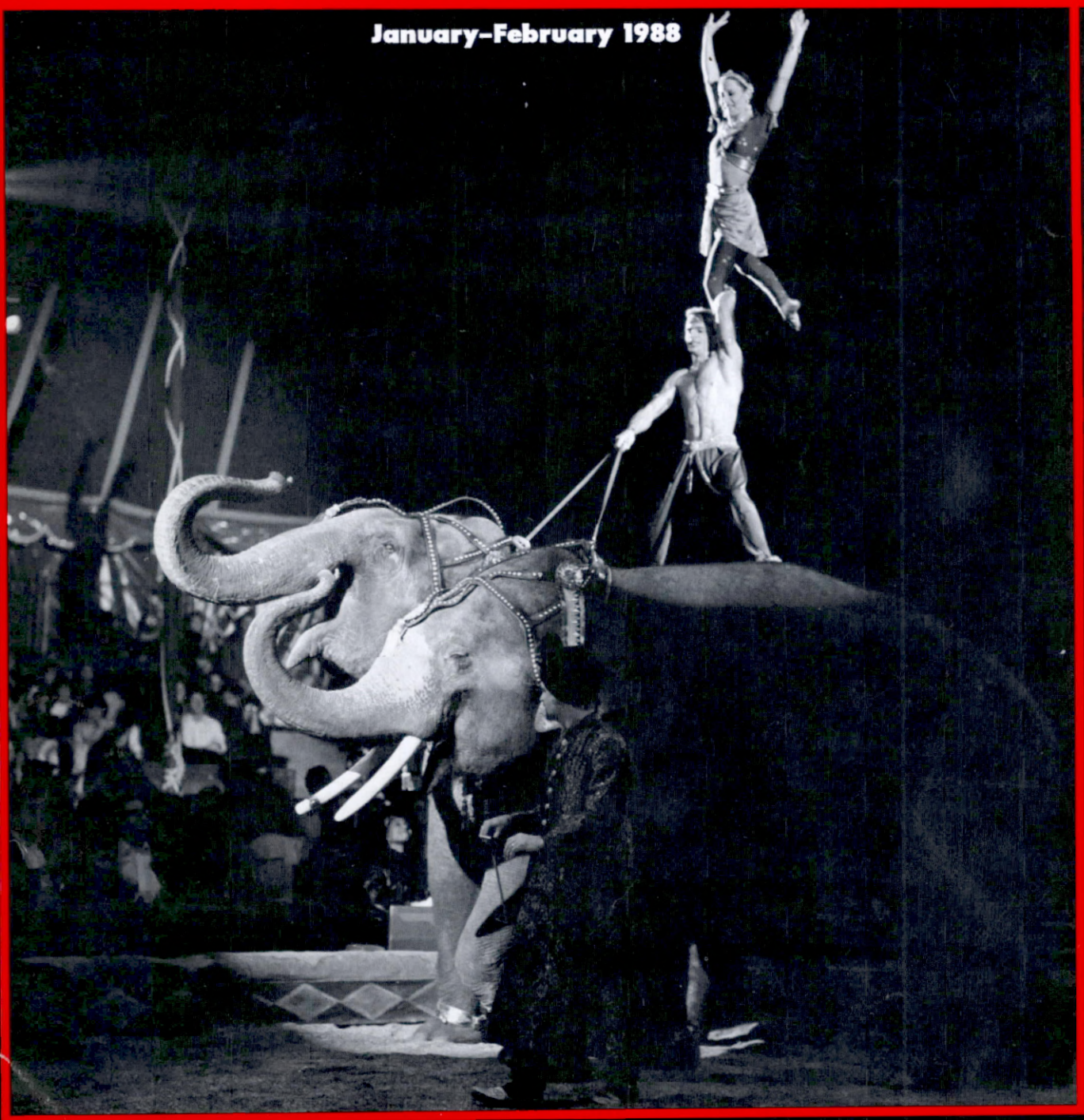
The 1987 Circus Season In Review

BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

January–February 1988



The Journal of the
BANDWAGON
Circus Historical Society

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The circus is many things, one of which is beautiful. That grace and elegance is summed up in this superb photograph of the Big Apple Circus performance during its New York City engagement in December 1987. As William Woodcock leads Toto (with tusks) and Peggy around the ring, David Dimitri balances Marie Pierre Benac. Photograph by Holton Rower.

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Respectfully submitted,
John F. Polacsek
February 12, 1988

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CORRECTIONS

Some errors appeared in the Reo Bros. Circus article in the November-December 1987 issue. The show did have new canvas in 1936. A city referred to in the article is Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, not Kenneth Squire. The following paragraph was omitted at the end of the article:

"As we conclude the initial article of the revived Short Sketches feature we would like to thank the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin for furnishing information and a photo from its files and also to Kenneth Wheeler for the 1936 photos he sent so long ago."

Ed Lester sent the following corrections on the 1955 Ringling-Barnum article in the same isue.

Two of the D-7 Catterpillers, not D-6, traveled on dollies. These units had metal cleats, not rubber, thus the dollies. The other Cats that went over the road to the lot had rubber pads.

DO NOT SEND DUES EARLY

Please do not send your 1988 CHS dues or subscription payment to the Secretary-Treasurer until you have received your notice in the mail. Your payment can be mailed in the return envelope. The notices will be mailed in late April.

1988 CHS CONVENTION

The 1988 Circus Historical Society convention will be held in Shelburne, Vermont from Wednesday, August 10 through Saturday, August 13. This should be a very special meeting as our host show will be the Big Apple Circus which is covered extensively in this issue. We will get an inside look at this fascinating troupe just as we have Beatty-Cole, Carson and Barnes, and Great American in the past.

Big Apple will be in Shelburne under the auspices of the Shelburne Museum which is one of the finest historical museums in the country. Located on forty-five acres, the site includes six fully restored historic houses, a fabulous collection of American folk art, the 220 foot long steam paddlewheeler, S. S. Ticonderoga, a private railroad car, and much, much more.

Of special interest to members is the great model circus parade owned by the late Roy Arnold, a one time CHS director, which is displayed in its own building. Many members will recalled Arnold's model was featured in *Life* magazine years ago. The museum also owns both the Arnold and Harry T. Peters circus lithograph collections which are two of the finest in the country with many unique posters from the mid-l9th century and a number of rare examples from the presses of Buffalo's Courier Company.

The convention committee has set aside an entire day to view the Shelburne Museum. As part of the tour the museum has agreed to make a rare private showing of their posters to CHS members. You won't want to miss this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Other events on the agenda include the annual banquet with an address by a mover and shaker in the circus industry, the presentation of historical papers, a behind the scenes tour of the Big Apple Circus, talks by Big Apple personnel, and the ever popular circusiana auction. We will, of course, have reserved seats for a Big Apple Circus performance. All this will be included as part of your registration fee. Ample time will be set aside for jackpotting, and to visit the many other points of interest in the Burlington-Shelburne area.

Shelburne, Vermont is located seven miles from Burlington on beautiful Lake Champlain in the heart of the scenic Green Mountains. Burlington is easily accessible by both car and plane with direct air service from New York, Newark, Chicago, Boston, Washington, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Albany and Syracuse.

Negotiations are underway with a hotel. Further details about the convention will appear in the March-April issue, and the May-June issue will contain the hotel and convention registration cards. Brochures are available on the Shelburne Museum and the Burlington area by writing Fred Pfening III, CHS Convention Chairman, 2315 Haverford Road, Columbus, Ohio 43220.

To assist in scheduling, please contact Pfening as soon as possible if you plan to give a paper.



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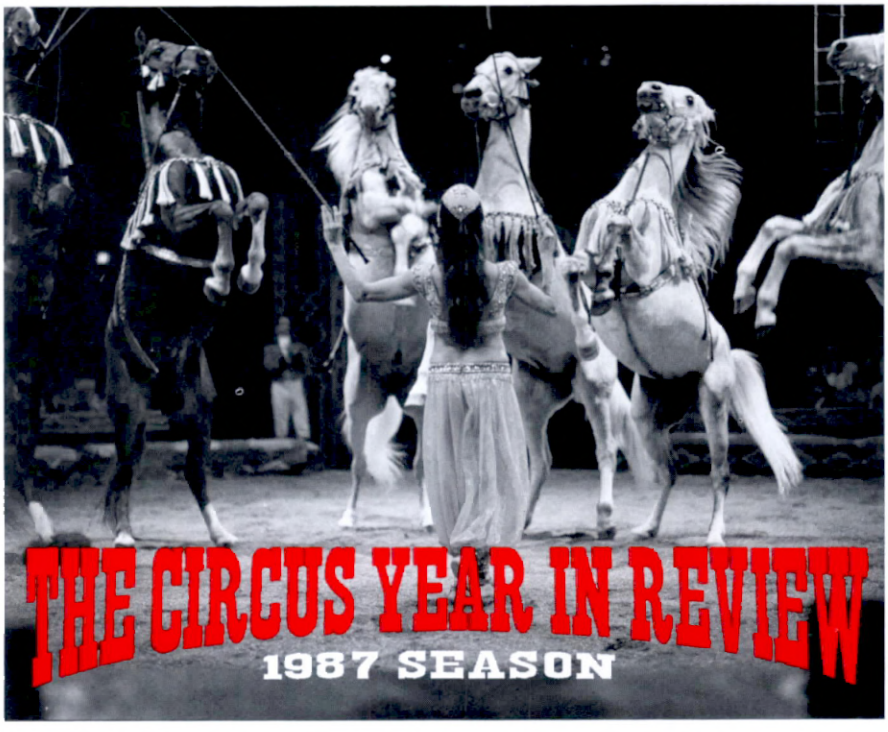
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THE CIRCUS YEAR IN REVIEW

1987 SEASON

Katja Schumann-Binder puts the Big Apple liberty horses through their paces. Holton Rower photo.

By Fred D. Pfening III

The 1987 season was just a typical circus season," wrote that noted sawdust scholar James K. Judkins. And it was. Nothing cataclysmic happened. No big shows folded; the Toby Tyler Circus didn't stir up the industry as it did the year before; the flap over Shrine circuses and Shrine charities passed with what seemed to be little long term damage; the cost of liability insurance, while still historically high, leveled off; animal rights groups and government regulators made no great inroads; profits may have been down a bit, but were still satisfactory. It was, as Judkins noted, "just a typical circus season." But it wasn't.

On the coasts--in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco--the American circus was being transformed into a more sophisticated, more theatrical medium, the long term implications of which may be as profound as the move to three rings in the 1880s. Not since Norman Bel Geddes, Igor Stravinsky, and George Balanchine formulated parts of the Ringling-Barnum performance during the 1940s had the circus veered into so many new areas at once. While it was business as usual for other troupes, four circuses, Cirque du Soleil, Big Apple, Pickle Family, and Circus Oz, were remaking, even revolutionizing, the industry with their creativity and innovation. It was not without reason that some scribes christened them "new wave" exhibitions, linking them to the new vaudeville and performance art movements. Despite significant differences, they shared a number of common traits which distinguished them from their more conventional brethren.

They were much more theatrical than traditional circuses in the use of lighting, costuming, and music as an integral part of the performance, a reflection of their creative vision being rooted in the Broadway theater, street performance, mime and the European circus rather than in the grassy lots, malls and arenas of the American heartland. The use of original music was a common thread. All were one ring affairs, which drew the audience more into the performance than did the three ring spectacles. All emphasized high production values, resulting in a presentation which appealed to an older, more urbane audience. They were entertainment for adults, rather than children. Often, a concept was carried through from start to finish in the program with one act flowing into the next without anouncements. Only one carried animals, and none used traditional slapstick clowns.

They were all not for profit corporations which received foundation, government, and corporate grants; two of the troupes supported their own circus schools. Some used sponsors which had never contracted a circus before. None was solely dependent on the usual sources of revenue, ticket sales and concessions, to meet expenses. In fact, it was doubtful any of the four could have existed in a purely capitalist environment which may prohibit profit making circuses from copying their techniques and equipment. All met with great success in large metropolian areas, raising the question if this form of circusing could, literally, "play in Peoria."

They were darlings of newspaper critics who reviewed them with a seriousness usually reserved for theatrical shows, and lavished praise upon them usually reserved for successful theatrical shows. Celebrities flocked to see them, and the general public packed their tents, bleachers, and halls. It became trendy to go to the circus. They were treated as a legitimate part of the performing arts, a status rarely accorded the circus in America. Virtually all observers, knowledgeable and otherwise, raved about them. While the impact of Cirque du Soleil and Big Apple was greater than that of Pickle Family and Circus Oz, all four organizations significantly influenced American circusing by inspiring performers and show exec-

A major event in 1987 was the appearance of Montreal's Cirque du Soleil in California. It is shown here on the lot in Santa Monica. Jerry Cash photo.



utives to new heights of professionalism and by raising the expectations of circus goers. Only time will tell, of course, if history will view them as the source of a major redirection of the circus, or as only an interesting aberration.

Montreal's Cirque du Soleil, in only its fourth season, most embodied the values of "new wave" circuses. It made extraordinary use of lighting, music, dancing, costumes and special effects to create an amazing Alice in Wonderland quality in the ring. Founder Guy Laliberte called it a "high tech circus" because of its innovative use of state of the art equipment. The production was everything as the show had no stars and everyone doubled and tripled. It was almost like watching a Broadway musical about the circus. Jan Hoffman of the *Village Voice* summed it up: "It was a circus but it wasn't but it was. I'd never seen anything like it."

Its key was the presentation of old acts in new ways. A teeterboard act, for example, was transformed into a different realm when the troupe came out wearing business suits and bowler hats, and carrying briefcases. They marched through their routine as automatons on fast forward accompanied by the appropriate music. While the skill level was no better or worse than a dozen such acts, the effect was galvanizing. It was



The four Cirque du Soleil sleepers on lot in Sana Monica. Jerry Cash photo.

a true ensemble as many of the performers were trained at the show's circus school in Montreal, although one act, a bicy-cle number, was from mainland China. The clowns were contemporary, not slapstick, and some of the other acts, particularly a male and female hand balancing duo, were technically quite good.

The show exhibited in Quebec from May 7 through August 23, spending over a month in Montreal. On September 3 it made its American debut in Los Angeles where it appeared until the 27th. It then moved to San Diego where it exhibited from October 2 to the 18th, after which it returned to the Los Angeles area, playing almost a month on the beach in Santa Monica. Canadian International Airlines helped underwrite portions of the American tour.

The show absolutely rocked the California crowds. Virtually every American performance received at least one and sometimes more standing ovations, so strong was the show's emotional grip on its audience.

Cirque du Soleil appeared under a Canobio tent seating 1700. All the action took place in one ring, and the show carried no animals. The property moved on about 20 semi trailers, some of which were 27 feet long and pulled in tandem over the road. The show did not own any tractors, renting them when needed. All the physcial equipment was beautifully painted and titled in blue with yellow trim. Cirque du Soleil's impact on American circusing should continue as it opened in Santa Monica in early February 1988 with engagements planned in San Francisco and New York.

"I'm a protector of the tradition of 1792," stated Paul Binder, founder of the Big Apple Circus, in an August *Village Voice* interview. While he was a year early in his reference to John Ricketts, America's first circusman, his point was well taken as the show was strongly in the American tradition. It was quite simply a conventional circus of the highest order. Its performance was so technically excellent that it created a new type of show solely by doing everything so well. In many ways it retrieved the 19th century circus by reviving such lost arts as talking clowns and original music for acts. Most importantly, it was a one ring circus which created an intimacy lost in the larger extravaganzas. It was the triumph of quality over quantity, showing what could be achieved within the framework of the traditional circus.

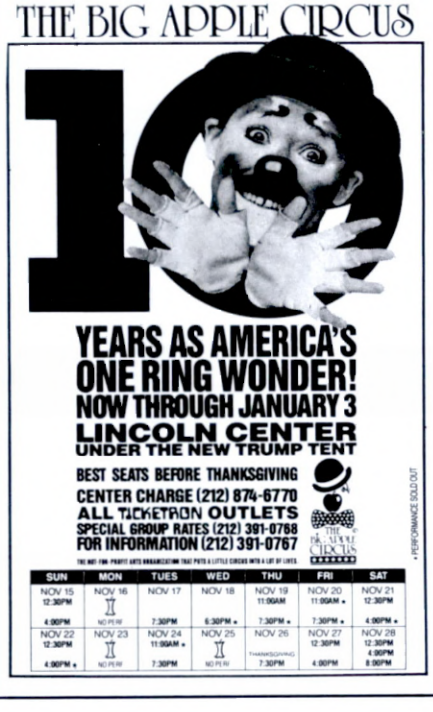
It was the only one of the four "new wave" shows to use animals and have stars. On its summer tour, which started in Brooklyn in April and concluded in Washington in August, the performing roster included some of the most notable acts in the business: Dolly Jacobs on the roman rings, Katja Schumann Binder with her horses, Bill Woodcock's elephants, and the Tito Gaona flyers. Not completely bound to the usual arenic presentations, the program also had Koma Zura, a Japanese top spinner; and, in the clown corps, Denis Lacombe whose conductor routine left the audience in tears of laughter. The lighting and musical accompaniment maximized the dramatic or comedic potential of each act.

Its fall and winter tour began in Washington in October, and after an interlude in Philadelphia, ended with the November 12 to early January 1988 run at Lincoln Center in New York City.



Marquee for Big Apple at Queens, New York on May 16, 1987. Arnold Brito photo.

Ad for Lincoln Center engagement of the Big Apple Circus. Author's collection.



The performance at the New York engagement, which was held in a new tent donated by developer Donald Trump, was more theatrical as the production was themed around the concept of "1001 Nights at the Circus." For the most part the acts flowed from one to another without introduction from the ringmaster. While some changes in personnel occurred, the performance was still superb, full of energy, tension and fun. The show was sold out for almost all the Lincoln Center performances, and it was of more than passing note that while Ringling-Barnum's 1987 New York run was shortened, Big Apple's was lengthened.

One area where Big Apple was clearly an innovator was in working under auspices which previously had not used circuses for fund raising purposes as children's museums in Pittsburgh and Boston, and Vermont's Shelburne Museum were among the show's sponsors. Had there been a trouper of the year award, Katja Schumann-Binder would have undoubtedly won. On June 17 she gave birth to a son only hours after working the evening show in Bridgeport, Connecticut. After taking off the matinee the next day, she returned to the ring that night less than than 24 hours after giving birth. The child was named Max Schumann Binder; a wag on the show said it should have been Baby Bridgeport after an elephant also born there in the Barnum and London winter quarters in 1882. On a much less joyous note, acrobat Phil Beder was seriously injured in a fifty foot fall during his act in Philadelphia on October 20.

The Pickle Family Circus, in its 13th season, was the oldest of the "new wave" circuses. Founded by Larry Pinsoni, aka Lorenzo Pickle, this troupe was the least outrageous of four, conveying a sense of fun and innocence with its cheerful costumes, colorful backdrop and playful performance. Like the other troupes, the Pickle band used original music, and the one ring, side-wall format created an intimate atmosphere. The performance was an ensemble without stars. Acts included acrobatics, juggling, single trapeze, clowning, trampoline, hand balancing, rola bola, and rolling globes. It was the quality of the presentation not technical virtuosity which was the source of the program's appeal. It carried no animals.



These circuses had new program cover designs for the 1987 season. Author's collection.

Playing for sponsors such as food banks and day care centers, the show opened in Santa Cruz, California on April 25, appearing in California until May 31. It then made its first move ever into the East and Midwest for June engagements in Stamford, Connecticut; Philadelphia; and Cincinnati. From July through late October it was back on the west coast with dates in Washington, Oregon, and California. It finished the year with a three week indoor date in its home town of San Francisco where it had a cult following.

Circus Oz from Australia billed itself as a "completely non-nuclear, solar-powered, anti-sexist, anti-contra" production, certainly the only show in America to take a stand on the Central American conflict. Its seventeen member troupe tore it up in San Francisco for two weeks in early July at the Palace of Fine Arts, playing to adoring reviews and entranced audiences. Prior to that engagement, the show was in England; afterwards it returned to its home in the South Pacific where it appeared under a tent. It was perhaps the first circus to ever play three continents in one year.

The freshness of its two and a half hour performance separated it more from mainstream American circuses than its leftist political ideology. For example, the juggling act began simply enough as a juggler named "Maurice from Paris" appeared on stage. Soon after another juggler, also called "Maurice from Paris," entered, resulting in a pitched juggling battle between the two. In another number a human fly, in an act similar to that which made Richard Sands a sensation in America and England in the 1850s, appeared on the ceiling where, dressed as a 1940s B movie private eye, he sat down at a bar, lit a cigarette, and poured himself a drink all while up side down. When he uttered the cliche "somehow things didn't seem quite right," the audience exploded. It was this weird, Twilight Zone quality where the usual was more than a bit askew that endeared Oz to its audience, and reflected the innovative thinking which made old routines seem new.

While the "new wave" circuses may have captured the public's imagination, the three big traveling tenters--Beatty, Vargas, and Carson and Barnes--



The Pickle Family Circus at Stamford, Connecticut in June. Stan Weber photo.

continued to capture their loose change as all three had successful seasons. After opening in its home town of DeLand, Florida in late March, the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus moved up the Atlantic seaboard, reaching Pennsylvania and New Jersey in May, and New York and New England in June and July. The show headed back south in August, closing on November 7 in Stuart, Florida. The route was similiar to past years, reflecting the owners' "East of the Hudson" philosophy of playing bedroom communities in the densely populated East. The season only put 9291 miles on the trucks, not many for a six and a half month tour.

The Arturo Gaona Flyers, and the Bale Sisters were among new performing personnel. Physical changes included a new seat wagon. Beatty-Cole carried nine elephants, eleven clowns, and nine band members. Returning acts included Josip Marcan and his cats, and the Tangiers troupe. Fred Rogers of public television fame visited the show near Philadelphia, and Sissy Spacek, Jessica Lange and Sam Shepard caught the show in Charlottesville, Virginia. The year marked treasurer Harry Hammond's 50th in the circus business. August 21 was John Pugh Day in Wilmington, Delaware. The show had a black tie benefit in Nashville for the local humane society in late summer.

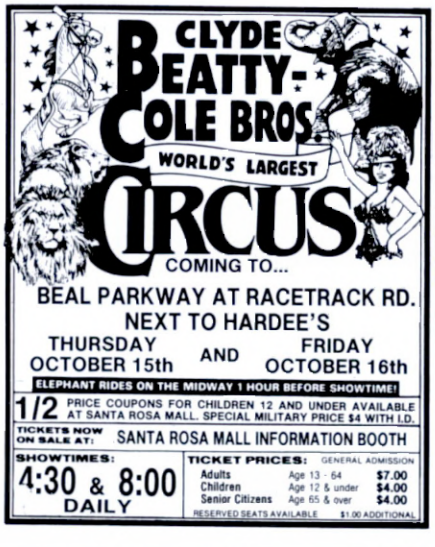
Circus Vargas had the most interesting route of any troupe on the road, making some of the longest jumps in circus history. Starting at Yuma, Arizona in January, the show quickly moved into the San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco areas for dates at various locations. After leaving California on May 19 the show jumped directly to Colorado for dates at Colorado Springs, and Pueblo, after which it made another long haul to Kansas City. Rather than play smaller towns enroute to desired locations, the show spent two, three, and even four days on the road between dates. Most of July and August was spent in Canada. Eight lots in the Chicago area were played from August 25 to September 20 after which another tremendous jump was made to the Washington, D. C. area for two indoor dates from September 23 to October 5. It was then off to Beaumont, Texas, 1200 miles southwest. The season ended November 15 in an arena in El Paso. The miles traveled must have seemed infinite.

New acts included Alan Gold and his lions and tigers, and the Ayak brothers from South Africa who did a sensational heel to heel catch a la Eddie and Jennie Ward. Rex Williams returned to boss thirteen elephants. Another elephantine feature was Ted Polk with Col. Joe, a huge male tusker. As in the past, the show started with a live band which it dropped for tapes not long after the season began.

The show was beefed up for the two D. C. area dates with Nikolai Nikolski and Bertalina Kazakova, the Soviet high wire walking couple who defected in 1986. A dozen clowns and free elephant rides were also added for these engagements.

The five indoor dates may have

Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus newspaper ad. Leroy Sweetland collection.



shift in the way Vargas did business marked the beginning of a significant as it had never been in a building before its appearence at the Patriot Center in Fairfax, Virginia on September 23. In the December 26 *Amusement Business* the show ran an ad which stated: "Attention Building Managers . . . You Now Have a Choice," an obvious challenge to Ringling-Barnum which had dominated the big city arena market for years and an indication that more indoor dates were planned.

Carson and Barnes, headed by D. R. Miller in his 51st year as a circus owner, had a good season. Opening in Paris, Texas in late March, the outfit trouped through that state, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, and Kansas up to June 1. June, July, August and September were spent in the Midwest before heading for home in Hugo, Oklahoma by way of Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri and Kansas. It finished the tour in its home state on November 1. The traditional high grass route covered approximately 14,300 miles, playing towns with populations of about 10,000.

It was a transition year for Carson and Barnes with new personnel in key positions. Jim Roller joined as general superintendent, Ken Holehouse as publicity director, Mike West as 24 hour man, Gracie Holman as press agent, and Doyle Milson as general agent. Old pro Charlie Stevenson came out of retirement at the last moment to again head the ten piece band.

The animal inventory, which had more exotic animals than many zoos, included twenty-two elephants, a giraffe, a pygmy hippo, a rhino, and a giraffe. The giraffe died in Franklin, Kansas near the end of the season. The show was physically large, taking 47 show owned steering wheels to move the property, and about 35 private vehicles to transport the actors and staff.

The performance was a mixture of new and old acts. As had been the case in past years, the flying trapeze department was strong with five fliers completing the triple somersault. The elephant number was again impressive as was Pat White's cat act. White was badly clawed during the winter while picking up a tiger at the Beatty show winter quarters.

Carson and Barnes played old time circus capitals of Delavan, Wisconsin in July and Peru, Indiana in August. Pee Wee Herman spent some time on the show in October gathering background information for his forthcoming circus movie. On closing day, D. R. and Isla Miller presented Ted Bowman with a plaque commerating his 25 years with

Miller family circuses. General manager Jim Judkins further enhanced his reputation as the late 20th century's answer to Charles Andress by publishing another fine route book.

Much of Toby Tyler Circus owner Dick Garden's year was taken up with lawyers as he spent a great deal of time in court, mainly answering allegations stemming from the show's bizarre 1986 tour. In January he was charged with 16 counts of assault and reckless endangerment resulting from the collapse of the troupe's bleachers at Greensport, New York on June 16, 1986. In April the state of Maine seized assets of his Hollywood on Ice show because of failure to pay fines incurred there the year before. In July he agreed to pay New York $100,000 in an out of court settlement stemming from the Greensport incident. He also agreed to a $5000 fine for violating state bleacher safety standards, to provide restitution to all customers who attended the circus that day or who had bought tickets for the 12 performances cancelled as a result of accident, and to pay $8634 in back wages from a 1984 suit. He was permanently barred from doing business in New York. The agreement cleared Garden of all criminal charges.

That same month a college sued him to collect $2400 he owned for renting a campus building for a 1984 variety show. In September Garden was briefly jailed in Sarasota for allegedly writing a bad check to a Kentucky newspaper. He was released on $50 bond. He was back in court in August when a former associate sued Garden for $300,000 he claimed Garden owed him. In October he was banned from doing business in Vermont because of violations of the



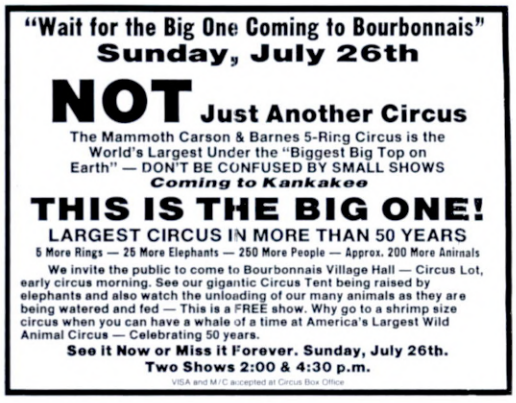
In the tradition of Ed J. Kelty, the Carson and Barnes personnel had a group photo taken. John Polacsek photo.

state consumer fraud act. The judge ordered him to pay over $176,000 plus interest, and also decreed he had to pay $7000 to the Middlebury law firm that represented him in court. Later that month, he was barred from soliciting for charity for violation of that state's charitable solicitation and consumer protection laws. In November yet another lawsuit alleged that Garden and a former business associate owed $190,000 on five condominiums in Sarasota.

When Garden wasn't subsidizing the American legal profession, he ran the Toby Tyler Circus which pulled out of quarters near Sarasota on April 26 amid much fanfare. The twenty-two truck convoy was given a grand send off to its opening stand at Lake Wales on the 28th with a brass band, air calliope and bagpiper all heralding the event. After a few days in Florida the show moved into Georgia, and then headed west across the South into Texas, reaching the lone star state on May 19.

Toby Tyler was in the Plains states and the Midwest for most of June, July and August. In July a blow down occurred in Howard, Wisconsin, near Green Bay. No one was seriously hurt, although over 40 towners and show people were treated for injuries. The circus was commended by local officals for its handling of the situation as show hands immediately cut holes in fallen top, allowing the audience to escape. In late July, the Michigan Humane Society seized Tyrone the Terrible, a large chimp which had been a fixture on the show's midway. Misdemeanor warrants were issued against his two handlers for abusing him. Tyrone was eventually sent to a non-profit sanctuary for homeless animals near San Antonio, thus ending a distinguished career.

More negative press appeared during the summer as a Plymouth, Wisconsin paper reported that the show bounced checks for newspaper ads during a July performance there. Checks were written


"Wait for the Big One Coming to Bourbonnais"
Sunday, July 26th
NOT Just Another Circus
The Mammoth Carson & Barnes 5-Ring Circus is the World's Largest Under the "Biggest Big Top on Earth" — DON'T BE CONFUSED BY SMALL SHOWS
Coming to Kankakee
THIS IS THE BIG ONE!
LARGEST CIRCUS IN MORE THAN 50 YEARS
5 More Rings — 25 More Elephants — 250 More People — Approx. 200 More Animals
We invite the public to come to Bourbonnais Village Hall — Circus Lot, early circus morning. See our gigantic Circus Tent being raised by elephants and also watch the unloading of our many animals as they are being watered and fed — This is a FREE show. Why go to a shrimp size circus when you can have a whale of a time at America's Largest Wild Animal Circus — Celebrating 50 years.
See it Now or Miss it Forever. Sunday, July 26th.
Two Shows 2:00 & 4:30 p.m.
VISA and M/C accepted at Circus Box Office

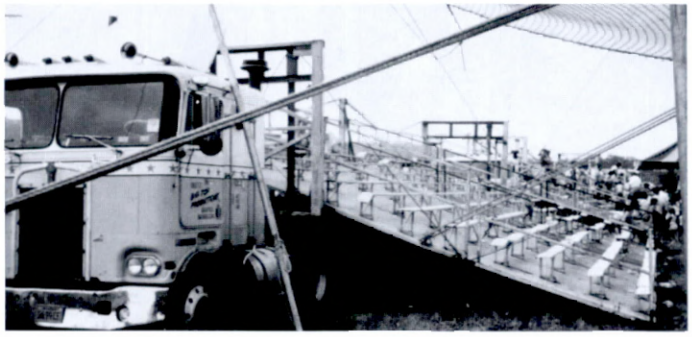
Carson and Barnes ran this ad in the *Daily Journal* in Kankakee, Illinois on July 17 against Toby Tyler which appeared there on the 20th. Tom Parkinson collection.

by Tom Mix Advertising of Sarasota. The Wisconsin Newspaper Association issued an alert to members not to accept advertising from the show or the Tom Mix agency. A number of articles and letters to editors were published criticizing the quality of the performance, ticket policy and concession prices.

Carson and Barnes on the lot at Booneville, Indiana on September 23. Bill Rhodes photo.



By mid-August the show made a quick swing eastward, playing Manchester, New Hampshire on the 15th. Soon after it was in Kentucky, West Virginia and Ohio. It was back in the South in September and October, arriving back in winter quarters on October 6. Insurance problems vexed the show during the second half of the season as a number of dates were lost because of sponsors' concerns over the organization's liability coverage. The Sterling Bros. title was used on some dates.



Seat wagons on Toby Tyler Circus. Tom Parkinson photo.

When given in its entirety, the performance was creditable with Pom Pom Donoho and three baby African elephants, a flying act, two performing hippos presented by Harry Pope, the



Tiny Tim was the big feature on Allan Hill's Great American Circus. Fred Pfening, Jr. photo.

Ayala family, a tiger act and a liberty-pony act. Russell Darr directed the band. Apparently some of the acts left during the year, and there was an unconfirmed report that manager Pete Cristiani left the show about two weeks before it came in. Problems with the tent led to many blue sky dates.

On a positive note the seat wagons which had failed to work properly in 1986 were modified and used, with the result that the tragedies of the previous year were not repeated. Furthermore, the show had the second best menagerie on tour with six elephants, an ostrich, a rhino, several zebras, two hippos, camels, and ponies. While the season hardly brought glory to the show or the industry, it didn't create anything approaching the negative impact of 1986. Allan C. Hill's Great American Circus opened in Florida in early March and soon headed up the Atlantic Coast, reaching New Jersey in May. The troupe headed west in June enroute to an appearance at July's Great Circus Parade in Milwaukee, after which it turned back to its more familiar eastern territory. By late September the show headed back south, reaching winter quarters outside Sarasota in November. The show appeared to have mixed success at the box office as bad weather hurt the show in the spring, and a number of truck break-downs caused difficulties in the fall.

The show used a 90 foot round top with three 40s. The feature of the performance was Tiny Tim who returned after appearing with Great American in 1984 and 1985. He was a true trouper, not only singing the songs which made him a curiosity twenty years ago, but also autographing coloring books at intermission and, perhaps most importantly, giving innumerable media interviews along the route which of course was great advertising. Dipping into his vast knowledge of American popular songs, he customized his act to include regional favorites, often college fight songs.

Other acts including Dick Kohlreiser's comedy dogs and ponies, Tim Frisco and two elephants, and the Castrajon Duo's wheel of death. For the Milwaukee stand the program was beefed up by the addition of the Loyal riding act, Kay Rossaire and her cats (performing in a tent for the first time), and Bobby Moore's elephants. A three piece band backed up the performance. The outfit moved behind about thirteen show owned vehicles including eight semis. The equipment was attractively painted, giving a very fine impression. The midway had an elephant ride, a pony ride and a moon bounce, the latter an unfortunate but obviously money making addition to most front doors in recent years.

Brightly painted semi on Great American. Fred Pfening, Jr. photo.



Allan Hill became a national sex symbol after dates with him brought $12,000 and $11,000 at a charity auction, and he was featured as *Cosmopolitan* magazine's bachelor of the month in December. The $12,000 was the most ever paid at such a fund raising event. Hill's purchaser, Linda Diehl of Sarasota, attended the Milwaukee parade as her prize where, among other activities, she briefly addressed members at the CHS banquet.

The Kelly-Miller Circus, a venerably titled outfit headed by David Rawls, opened in its winter quarters town of Hugo, Oklahoma in March, playing throughout the South until late May. June and July were spent in the Midwest, mainly Michigan, and almost all of August was in Ontario. The show was in the high grass of Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, and Arkansas in September and October, closing at Mena, Arkansas on October 24. The five show owned semis each covered about 17,000 miles during the thirty-three week route.

New equipment included an office wagon, a power plant, wardrobe and new bleachers. The side show contained knife throwing, whip cracking, fire eating, a blade box, magic and a Punch and Judy show. The three ring performance featured traditional small show fare backed up by an organ and drums. Three elephants, owned by D. R. Miller, were carried.

A highlight of the season was hosting the Circus Fans Association convention in Laurel, Maryland in late May. The show set up its new tent for the first time at this stand. Ringmaster Harry Rawls was the banquet speaker, giving by all accounts an excellent talk. For the second year in a row the



New office wagon used by Kelly-Miller. Fred Pfening, Jr. photo.

show had a big three day date for a health center in Ann Arbor. The show participated in a parade, and held a black tie gala in the tent for 400.

Wayne Franzen's Franzen Bros. Circus appeared to have rebounded after a tough 1986 season. After opening in Texas in late February, the show moved into the Midwest in late April, staying in that region through October. Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas were also October locales. For its fourteenth tour, the show used a new tent, a 90 foot round top with a 50 foot middle which held about 1100. The one ring performance, which lasted about an hour and a half, was headed by Franzen himself who worked a nine cat act, and two baby African elephants. The troupe was pulled by nine show owned tractors. Usually, a one day show, the aggregation did a few three day stands to cut the wear and tear on the equipment. Art Cooksey was manager.

Manuel Romas' Oscarian Bros. Circus didn't get much ink in 1987, consequently details of the show were lacking. It was in Tampa in March under a red and white big top which housed three rings. The performance included Ramos' mixed cat act, a gorilla parody, and an African elephant. The show had five trucks and an office bus. The midway had a snake show, two kiddie rides, novelty stand, and pony and elephant rides. Other Florida dates were played in October and November. The show and sponsor got into a beef in Land O'Lakes, Florida in November when the local Chamber of Commerce failed to pay the circus its share of advance ticket sale, claiming the show didn't give them the advertising or the program promised.

Busy midway of Roberts Bros. Circus in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania June 13. Mort Gamble photo.



The Circo D'Carlo carved out a special niche for itself as all advertising and the entire program was in Spanish. Owned by Carlos Farfan and his family the show appeared in Latino neighborhoods in Southern California from at least April through September. A tented one ringer, it carried no animals, but was heavy on clowns, gymnasts, and acrobats. The troupe was an interesting example of marketing to a specific ethnic group.

After the death of her husband in 1986, Doris Earl, the modern day Agnes Lake, headed up Robert Bros. Circus, assisted by her family. Moving on seven trucks, the show opened in Florida in April, spending much of the year in the East and New England. It was back in Florida in October. The three ring performance included an elephant named Lisa, a camel named Patty, and llamas. Human entertainers included ringmaster Brian LaPalme and his magic act, and Dick Stuart and an uncaged cougar and leopard. Music was provided by an organ and drums, the standard arrangement on smaller shows. The midway had a pony sweep, elephant ride, snake show, and an elephant skin dog show. Roberts Bros. hosted a black tie dinner dance for a hospital in Leesburg, Virginia during the year, one of at least four circuses to participate in such events.

Robert "Red" Johnson's Culpepper and Merriweather Circus opened in Arizona in February, and moved into California in March, playing small towns in that state through the end of May. It then moved east into the Chicago area were it appeared in late June and much of July. The show then gradually headed west, playing Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Texas and New Mexico, closing at Lordsburg, New Mexico on October 13. The whole outfit moved behind nine steering wheels, four of which the show owned. The troupe had some interesting sponsors, appearing at a number of Air Force bases in the west, for Pizza Hut at the Taste of Chicago festival, and for Chicago's summer camp program. The performance was given four times a day at the Taste of Chicago run at Grant Park.

A one ringer which had grown a bit each year of its short life, the troupe had a new, larger tent, a Scola which was 60 by 90 feet. Two more people were added to the roster as was an African elephant named Lucky Barbara. The hour and a half performance included several aerial numbers; a dog, pony and goat act; a revolving ladder act; a whip cracking act; juggling and a rola bola. An organ replaced the canned music of previous years. Performers all doubled and tripled, including Lynn Metzger and Terrell "Cap" Jacobs III who married



Elephant truck on Culpepper and Merriweather with Barbara in front. Joe Fleming photo.

under the big top in Chicago on July 3 with much attendant publicity.

Vidbel's Old Time Circus, owned by Al and Joyce Vidbel, toured from May to September through New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Virginia, closing with three days at the Marine base at Quantico, Virginia on September 17-19. The show used an 80' round top with a 40' middle section. Charles Moyer managed the troupe. The performance included a number of animal acts among which were Gee Gee Engesser's three Asian elephants, and a mixed liberty act worked by Al Vidbel. Cindy Herriott did her cloud swing, and Skin and Bones were talking clowns.

Plunkett's Olde Tyme American Circus opened April 1 by playing three weeks in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Like the Mollie Bailey Circus of old, Plunkett



Midway of Terrell Jacobs Circus, aka Ford Bros. Joe Fleming photo.

appeared mainly in the Southwest, closing near Phoenix on November 20 and returning to quarters in Maybank, Texas. This one ring canvas caravan, owned by the Plunkett family, performed in one ring using taped music. The tent was from the old King Bros. Circus. Christopher James on slack wire, Pete Luvas and two elephants, and Bunkie Borger and his bison Cody were among the actors. Marie Pettus, widow of elephant man Bert Pettus, had the inside novelty stand.

John and Betty Reids' Reid Bros. Circus had a fifteen week split season under canvas, often appearing under Shrine auspices. The spring tour opened in early May and closed in July, playing their home state of Oregon and the Big Sky states. The show also played five weeks in Texas and Louisiana starting on September 9 at Corsicana, Texas and closing October 13 at Shreveport, Louisiana. On the fall run a three piece band backed up the performance which was in two end rings and a center stage. Acts included Helena Carpenter and seven cats and Davide Zoppe's monkeys.

Friendly Bros. Circus, owned by John Schoonbeck, started its fifth season at Poughkeepsie, New York on May 15. It toured through at least early July in New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania under a blue vinyl top which was approximately 50' by 30'. The hour and a half performance, which used taped music, was made up of typical small show attractions including dogs, a pony and a chimp. Bob Good made some dates doing his foot balancing and rola bola act. The show worked for the PTA at some dates, and made at least one festival.

The Allen Bros. Circus, headed by Allen Bedford, toured the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida from October through December. Performing under a 140' by 70' big top the exhibition featured Safari Pete Woods with his lions, and Cheryl Crain and a two year old African elephant. Phil Chandler was ringmaster, and doubled as a magician. The troupe wintered in Wauchula, Florida.

John "Gopher" Davenport's Terrell Jacobs Circus, a reincaration of Ford Bros., was the season's phantom show as virtually no information about it appeared in the trade press. Beyond being in Indiana in May, Wisconsin in July, and Nebraska in August and October, even the route was a mystery. It exhibited under a red and white stripped canvas using two center poles. The one ring performance included a lion act, Oklahoma Shorty Shearer's liberty horse act and his whip cracking act. An organ provided the music. It carried five elephants, both Asian and African. The midway had a snake show and a midget horse show. Unsubstantiated reports indicated the show had difficulty getting sponsors and insurance, resulting in many open dates.

Other tenters were also not well covered. David Mobbs' Circus USA again had its under canvas dates in the Miami area in mid-October with Bertalina and Nikolai Nikolski, the Soviet high wire walkers, as the feature. A hurricane caused the show to miss a performance as the tent was lowered as a safety precaution. Circus Bruno advertised for both performers and tent show staffers in May for a Western United States and South Pacific route, but no evidence was found to indicate the show ever toured. A lone North Carolina sighting around August of the Anderson and Clark Circus was the total documentation of that troupe. It was a one ring tent show which used a 120' by 80' top, seating about 800. Its side show had a fire eater, magican, human pretzel, blade box, and petting zoo. Jim Hand was the owner.

Baggage wagons from Ringling-Barnum blue unit at Columbus, Ohio. Fred Pfening, Jr. photo.





David Mobbs' Circus USA played the Miami area in October. Arnold Brito collection.

Kenneth Feld's Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's red unit performance was probably the most contemporary in the history of the show with a group of freestyle bicycle riders who did all sorts of contortions on specially equiped bikes including a somersault and a leap over five elephants. While the circus boomed these acts as appearing for the "first time anywhere," they were in reality updated versions of turn of the century thrill acts carried by Barnum and Bailey and other shows, and 19th century leapers. The elephant number, which included break dancing, punk wardrobe, and rock and roll music, was also modernistic. One of the clown routines was a spoof on the Ghostbusters movie.

The performance contained a number of traditional attractions, most notably the King Tusk spec which featured the giant Asian male elephant Tommy, "the Largest Land Mammal on the Face of the Earth." In an interesting historical aside, the show's adveritising noted that King Tusk was "more colossal than the Mighty Jumbo," a reference one suspects went over the heads of many



Wait ad placed in Chicago paper by Ringling Barnum in August against Vargas which was in the area. Author's collection.

patrons until the connection was explained when a rather smallish African elephant representing Jumbo was paraded around the hippodrome track as a prelude to King Tusk's grand entrance. King Tusk traveled over the road in regal fashion in a specially built, beautifully painted semi-trailer.

The show had numerous other new acts including two seal acts (the first on the circus in years), a trampoline number, a flying act using a variation of a Russian giant swing, and a contortionist act. Veteran Gunther Gebel Williams still worked his magic with cats, liberty horses and elephants. Satin was another returning act as cousins Denise Aubrey and Pa-mela Hernandez did their cradle turn. In all, it was one of the most satisfying Ringling-Barnum performances in years, nicely mixing the modern with the traditional, and the technically difficult with the spectacular.

The red unit opened at the winter quarters in Venice, Florida on January 2, working its way north to the Madison Square Garden engagement which began on April 7. The New York run was only six weeks, down from ten in 1986 and a high of thirteen in the 1970s. The show was in California from July 15 until September 14, and in the Chicago area from October 20 to November 15. The troupe laid-off for almost three weeks after closing in Nashville on December 6, reopening in Miami Beach the day after Christmas without going back to winter quarters.

Barbara Mandrell hosted the annual television broadcast of the troupe which was recorded at St. Petersburg on January 8. In February, two members of the Tudorica family of Rumanian risley performers defected. The show had to battle a record snow fall in loading the 44 car train at Charleston, West Virginia in early April enroute to New York. John "Mercury" Morgan was hurt on June 13 in Philadelphia while hurdling five elephants on his bike. He returned to the show soon after. Morgan, a religious young man, published an article in Norman Vincent Peale's magazine *Guideposts*. Veteran clown Duane Thorpe, who retired at the end of the 1986 tour, returned to work in the concessions department.

The Ringling-Barnum blue unit opened on December 26, 1986 at Miami Beach after laying off for two and a half weeks after closing at the Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, New York on December 7. Being the second tour for this performance, the show tended to play smaller venues although major dates were made in Washington, D. C., Houston, Fort Worth, Dallas, and Cleveland. The unit disbanded after closing at Pittsburgh on November 22. The show laid off after the final day in Columbus, Ohio on May 31, reopening in Louisville on June 17 after the equipment was given a once over and the train repainted. The train consisted of 44 cars including 23 coaches, a pie car, a generator-shop car, 2 baggage cars, 12 flats, a bi-level car and 4 stocks.

The program was virtually identical to 1986's with the acts from the People's Republic of China as the highlight. Holdover features included Daniel Suskow's exotic liberty act, the Peters' wheel of death, the Flying Vazquez, Axel Gautier and the elephants, Wade Burck and the white tigers, and the Quiros on the high wire.

One of Wade Burck's tigers gave birth during a performance in Cincinnati in April. When Burck saw what had happened he immediately terminated the act, moving the tigers back to their cages. He picked up the cub, which had broken free of its mother, and placed the youngster in the mother's cage. Targa the elephant, whose career on the big one went back to the under canvas days, died in Providence, Rhode Island in May. Two lesser known bulls also expired during the tour. The show played the Oklahoma State Fair in late September, the first fair date for Ringling-Barnum in years. The Walt Disney World on Ice, another Feld show, immediately preceeded the circus at the Oklahoma City building, the first time ever that the ice show and the circus had played back to back dates.

In other Ringling-Barnum news, the show made a number of videotapes available during the year which featured subjects such as the 1986 red unit performance, clowns, teaching dogs circus tricks, and thrill acts. Kenneth Feld backed the musical "Satchmo: America's Musical Legend," which debuted at the Kennedy Center in Washington in August and was scheduled to go to Boston in September. Unfortunately, the show died in Washington after being savaged by critics. The Ringling-Barnum thrill circus worked the St. Paul RiverFest in July with a MacValley globe of death, the Winn swaypole, the Carillo high wire act, and a clown troupe. A 20th anniversery reunion of graduates of Clown College in October garnered much free ink and was the basis of a February 1988 television special. Among the highlights of this august affair were appearances by Dick Van Dyke and Lou Jacobs, and the world's largest pie fight which used 500 cream pies. The 1500 funsters and their families in attendance made the event the largest convention ever held in Venice, Florida.

Shrine and other sponsored circuses were an essential and generally healthy art of the business in spite of contin-

Al and Joyce Vidbel's Olde Tyme Circus at Lebanon, Pennsylvania, in September. George C. Bingaman photo.



ued fall out from a June 1986 *Orlando Sentinel* article which was picked up by the wire services. It noted that Shrine circuses generated $23 million in revenues in 1985 of which less than 2% went to medical care of children with the rest going for Shriners' clubhouse expenses, travel, and fund raising. The story came back to life in April when Ann Landers quoted from it at length in her popular advice column. Queries about the amount of Shrine circus proceeds that actually went to the famous Shrine children's hospitals became known as "the question," within the industry as Shrine and circus personnel were put on the defensive. Shrine programs included a disclaimer stating that circus revenues supported Shrine operations and not childrens' hospitals. While the prospect of local temples withdrawing their sponsorship of circuses was harrowing, there was little evidence of decreased attendance nor cancelled dates and by year's end the sense within the circus business was that the crisis had passed.



Lou Ann Jacobs made a number of Hanneford Shrine dates with her baby elephants. Royal Hanneford Circus photo.

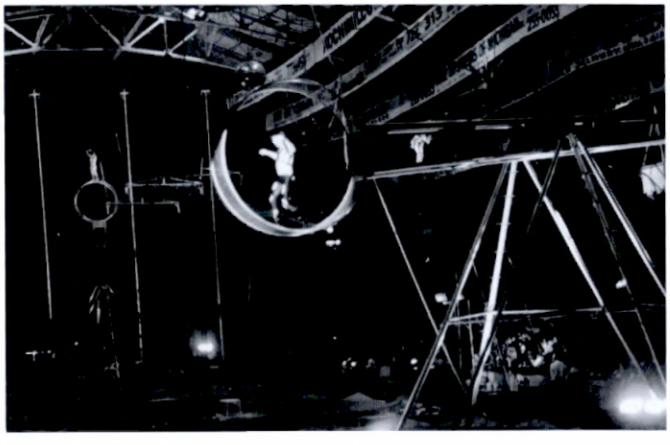
Tommy Hanneford's Royal Hanneford Circus had numerous Shrine dates starting with his traditional opening at Flint, Michigan on January 10. Other Michigan stands followed through early February after which troupe appeared in the South through March. A highlight of April was an eleven day run for the Houston Shrine, and in May the show was booked by the Cincinnati temple. During the summer Hanneford had one unit, called the red, at Darien Lake Amusement Park in New York, and another, called the green, at a park in Legionaire, Pennsylvania. On the week end of May 30-31 he had four units in operation. The rest of the year was spent with fair dates and more Shrine appearances. Three new Shrine dates were added to the tour which was illustrative of the turnover of producers which occurred annually.

Acts at early season dates included the Flying Espanas, Lou Ann Jacobs' and her baby African elephants, the Woodcock elephants, Gerard Soules and his poodles, Jorge Barreda and his lions, and riding by Nellie Hanneford and Mark Karoly. Kay Parker had the band and Senor Rai was ringmaster. At Darien Lake during the summer the show gave a one hour presentation under a 100 foot round top with a 50 foot middle.

The Tarzan Zerbini Circus was a major force in the world of Shrine circuses, operating two troupes most of the year. The western unit opened at Fort Wayne in early February, played a long stretch in western Canada before returning to the U. S. to play the Pacific Northwest and Big Sky states before closing in Missouri in July. The eastern unit started with the March 13-29 run at Detroit, the biggest Shrine date in North America, and spent much of the season in Ontario and Quebec before ending the year in Maryland in October. Both units appeared in arenas and under canvas, the eastern unit using the former Circus Tivoli top. At Ottawa in August the show day and dated Vargas, giving Canadian circus fans the rare opportunity to see two big canvas covered performances in one day.

The Fort Wayne stand was the American debut of Luba Pisarenkova and Yuri Krasnov, a pair of Russian performers who had defected in late 1986. Also appearing in Fort Wayne were the Jackie Althoff bears and the Flying Condors. A tiger act purchased from Circus Knie appeared with both units. Louis Knie worked the act for a while before returning to Europe. The Detroit engagement had a strong performance with the Rix bears, Gaylord Maynard and his horse Chief Bear Paw, the Nerveless Nocks, the Flying Caballeros, Hans Edling and his tigers, the Ben DeWayne and Canadian Zoological Systems elephants, and three giant wheels of death.

Tarzan Zerbini had three wheels of death at the big Detroit Shrine date in March. John Polacsek photo.



The George Cardin International Circus had as many as three units out, mostly for the Shrine. At Milwaukee in February, the exhibition included Henry Munoz's cannon act, a Nock wheel of death, Ada Smeiya's tigers, and the Flying Espanas. The show was called John Jordan's All American Circus during a May string of sidewalled one dayers in California. Otto Berosini and his wild animals made these dates. The show made a number of Shrine appearances in the Dakotas and Idaho, and state fairs in Missouri and West Virginia.

The Coronas Circus had some big city Shrine dates including Marietta, Georgia (outside Atlanta), Indianapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City and Shreveport, and a number in smaller towns, many of them in Missouri. The longest run of the season was ten days at Marietta where the performance was given under a rented Harold Barnes tent which was a 150 foot round top with four 50 foot middle section. Vivian Scott's football playing dogs, the George Hanneford elephants, and the Flying Garcias were among the acts. Mike Pike had the band, and Col. Lucky Larabee was the ringmaster. The Atlanta Shriners were serious businessmen as they also booked the W. H. Harden carnival with about twenty rides and a few shows to appear adjacent to the circus.

The St. Louis engagement was a seven ringer at Busch stadium where the baseball scoreboard showed instant replays of the performance in slow motion. Some of the wagons from Peru's Circus Hall of Fame were brought to Indianapolis to flash the date. The Shriners there put a carnival in the building with the circus in the English funfair fashion.

Circus Gatti or American Continental Circus worked for the Shrine, police, firefighters, and other sponsors from February to late October. It appeared in Texas, the Southwest, California, the Pacific Northwest,

and Western Canada. The show was known as Canadian International when north of the border. Acts included Jacqueline Zerbini with fourteen tigers and one lion, the Flying Pages, Tom Donoho with four elephants, all backed up by a three piece band. Patricia Gatti Colquohoun was president. The troupe appeared in both indoor and outdoor arenas.



Zerbini used the former Circus Tivoli tent. Photo taken at Frederick, Maryland on October 13. George Bingaman photo.

George Hubler produced shows for a variety of sponsors including the Shrine, Grotto, police and PTA in the Midwest, East, South, and Southwest. A mid-March date in Youngstown, Ohio for the Grotto had John Cox and the Cueno tiger act, King Arthur and Goldie on the high wire, the Flying Rodriquez family, Bobby Moore and his elephants, and Diana Wilson Allen and her trained seals. The latter was the only touring seal act besides the two on Ringling-Barnum. A series of dates in New York state used Al and Joyce Vidbel's big top. Hubler produced the McDonald's Circus at the Ohio State Fair in Columbus in August under a rented Bruno tent with the Flying Garcias, Jeanette Rix's bears, and Davide Zoppe's monkeys.

The Bentley Bros. Circus, owned by Tommy Bentley and Chuck Clancey, appeared for fraternal groups from late April until early June, from mid-July through late September, and in late November playing both indoor and grandstand dates. As in the past, the spring tour was in California while the fall and winter schedule included dates in Ohio and Pennsylvania. A number of well known acts worked on Bentley Bros.: Carol Marcan's tigers, the Flying Caballeros, the Stimax chimps, Jim Hall's bears, and Tim Loyal's riding troupe.

Hamid-Morton's tour ran from January 30 to June 21, playing mostly Shrine dates. The organization, headed by Geoge Hamid Jr., appeared mainly in the East although dates were booked in St. Paul, Kansas City, and Tulsa. At the season's opener in Roanoke, Virginia the acts included the Tegge clown troupe, John Cox and his tigers, Roy Wells and the Cueno elephants, and Sharon Ward's trained pigs. For the record, Ward's four pigs were named Knuckles, Ham Bone, Spare Rib and Pork Chop.

Eddie Zacchini's Olympic International Circus started the year with its traditional engagement at February's Florida State Fair in Tampa which featured John Herriott and his Clydesdale and pony, Phil and Francine Schact with Dondi the elephant, and the Great Wallendas. Working under a rented Harold Barnes tent, the show was sponsored by Have-A-Tampa Cigars and Budwesier. It was followed by the Chicago Shrine circus which was worked by the Rudi Lentz chimps, and the Flying Cortez among others. Zacchini suffered a mild heart attack during the Chicago stand. Other appearances for temples occurred in Macon, Georgia; Terre Haute, Indiana; Nashville, and Cleveland. He also produced the circus at the Alabama State Fair in Montgomery in October.



Alberto Zoppe's Circus Europa used this attractive backdrop during an engagement in Lancaster, Ohio. Fred Pfening, Jr. photo.

Bill Kay Shrine circused in Albany, Syracuse, Columbus, Salt Lake City, Ogden, Jacksonville, and other towns. At Columbus the acts included Carol Marcan and her tigers, Bobby and Rosa Gibbs' camels, the Dancing Gauchos, the Flying Eagles, the George Hanneford and Bill Morris' elephants, and the Great Wallendas. This date was a home coming of sorts for Debbie Wallenda who met her husband Enrico in Columbus when she interviewed him for a suburban newspaper a few years earlier. Later in the season Rick Wallenda was seriously injuried when he fell on September 18 during the Jacksonville engagement. Kay reportedly had a mild stroke during a Shrine date at Bradenton, Florida in the fall.

The Zoppe Circus Europa made a number of appearances during the year, including ones for the Shrine at Buffalo, Monroe, Louisiana and Denver. At Monroe the acts included the Flying Valencias, and the Delilah Wallenda Duo. In July the show made an arts festival in Lancaster, Ohio under a rented Bruno big top. Among the performers at this date were Lilli Anna Kristensen and her leopards, Ben DeWayne and his five elephants, Tino Wallenda Zoppe on the high wire. Cathy Rogers was the singing ringmistress.

Ron Kelroy, whose outfit was known as the Royal Australian Circus, had the Shrine date at Louisville in February with Andre Skarbecki and his lions, John Welde and his dancing bears, and Ben DeWayne and his elephants. Peter Sturgis was ringmaster. He also gave a number of grandstand and school shows. In May, Kelroy held a press conference in Champaign, Illinois to assure the sponsor, the Knights of Pythias, and potential customers that he was a legitimate operator after the Knights had been burned in 1986 when Toby Tyler was unable to appear. "We want people to understand we are in no way affiliated with the Toby Tyler Circus," he noted. "That guy's giving the whole industry a bad name and we're just trying to help clean up the mess he left here." He also produced the circus for the Illinois State Fair in August with the Flying Valencias. In the fall Kelroy had a series of Texas dates which were promoted by Ray Valentine. The M & M Circus, produced by Gracie McIntosh, had a few Shrine dates in Iowa and Nebraska in April and early May. At the Lincoln, Nebraska date Benny Williams was badly stomped by his elephant Peggy. Trouper that he was, Williams was back in the ring--bruises, broken ribs and all--a week later at the Circus World Museum opening. Other acts on this circuit were Bobby Gibbs and his camels and John Cox and the Hawthorn tigers.

Garden Bros. Circus, produced by Ian Garden, toured from February 13 through May 17. It appeared mainly in Ontario but had some state side Shrine dates. In Allentown, Pennsylvania the acts included Bill Morris and his elephants, and King Arthur and Goldie on the high wire. Miss Charlie Hackett was the ringmistress. From August 19 to September 7, the Ford Motor Company of Canada sponsored the show as the Family Fun Circus in Toronto. Kay Rosaire and her cats, and Althoff's bears were contracted for this one. Ed Migley's Circus Odyssey had Shrine dates starting with Hartford, Connecticut on February 4, running through May 10. February 27 through March 22 was spent in Puerto Rico. At Wilmington, Delaware in early May the bill was strong on animal acts with Lilli Anna and her six leopards, Killer Willard the boxing kangaroo, the Rix bears, baboons and chimps. The Wilmington Shriners obviously had an energetic advertising committee as the circus program there was over 400 pages with 1500 advertisers.

Paul Kaye had his traditional Shrine booking at Evansville, Indiana in late November with the Louis Knie tigers presented by Tarzan Zerbini. The Flying Espanas, and the Winn's wheel of death were among the other acts. A big date for Kaye was the E. K. Fernandez Circus and Fair in Honolulu from July 24 until August 2. The circus performed under an Anchor top which was a 120 foot around with a 50 foot middle section at the Aloha Stadium parking lot adjacent to Fernandez's midway. It sat about 2000 for the hour and forty-five minute show. Chief Silver Eagle and his trained bison Cody, Otto Berosini's mixed wild animals, the Carillo brothers on the high wire and the Flying Espanas were among the actors. Tim Tegge was producing clown, and Jack Cervone had the band.

Patrick E. Shallow had a group of Shrine appearances in Kentucky in April and May with Evy Karoly and her dancing stallion; Bill Commerford and Baby Dolly, an African elephant; and the Flying Caballeros. He called his troupe Circus International. Shallow's New World Performing Circus was the season's most prominent non-event. A high class outfit, apparently modeled along the lines of Big Apple, it was to exhibit at various locations in Chicago including Grant Park and the Navy Pier from late August through late November, and was then scheduled to play nine major cities through 1988. The acts were contracted, press releases issued, and advertising let, but when the Canobbio tent arrived funds were not available to pay for it. The debut was rescheduled, but the show never opened. Many performers and staffers camped in the Chicago area as late as early November, finally disbanding when it became apparent the show wouldn't open.



George Hubler produced the circus at the Ohio State Fair in August. Fred Pfening, Jr. photo.

This was the public's loss as the Tito Gaona Flyers, the Carillo Brothers high wire act, and the James Zoppe riders had been engaged.

Wayne McCary had his usual Maine Shrine dates in May. A Douglas MacValley globe of death made this circuit, one of five units MacValley toured. For the first time in years, McCary didn't have the circus at the Eastern States Exposition in West Springfield, Massachusetts as the fair booked Chinese acrobats for the September event. Robert Atterbury again produced the fall Texas Shrine run in Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, and Fort Worth from September 29 until November 7. Among the acts were Patricia Zerbini with seven tigers, and elephants from Tom Demry, Roy Wells, and Gary Thomas. Tim Tegge clowned, and Bill "Boom Boom" Browning had an eleven piece band. Don Johnson had the Shrine circus at Peoria in May under a rented Harold Barnes tent with Don Anderson's liberty horses, the Flying Cortez, and Carmen Hall's baboons. Barney Adkins, son of show great Jess Adkins, was general chairman for the Shrine.

Circuses were much in evidence at fairs and festivals, usually as free attractions with abbreviated performances. Often they were sponsored by companies in the food and beverage industry. A leading troupe in this genre was the Herriott Trained Animal Circus owned by John Herriott. It played fifteen fairs in Massachusetts, New York, Virginia, Vermont, North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida from June to November. The Herriott family put on most of the performance of this under canvas one ringer. Also on the bill were Junkyard Johnny Meah clowning, and the Jordans with their globe of death.

The George Hanneford Circus was another show with much experience on fairgrounds. Moving on five semi-trailers, this outfit used a four pole European style tent which was about 200 feet in diameter. Hanneford appeared at the Kentucky State Fair in August for McDonald's and Coca Cola. In November it performed at the Broward County Fair at Hallandale, Florida with the Lenz chimps, the Flying Cortez, and Katherine Hanneford and her liberty horses. The show spent the summer at an amusement pier on the New Jersey shore.

Dave Twomey's Happytime Circus had a number of dates at California fairs and festivals starting in late February. The show featured a llama and goat in a liberty act, and Wini McKay on the single trapeze. Happytime picked up two new fairs in 1987, but lost its usual engagement at the Los Angeles County Fair in Pomona which went without a circus for the first time in years. Tom Liebel's Liebel Family Circus made a number of fairs and festivals in the East and Midwest under a 90 foot by 60 foot big top. Like many of the one ring fair circuses the Liebel family put on much of the performance. The show also played a number of conventional sponsored dates. The organization had some bad press early in the year when the television show "20/20" attempted to interview them about the death of their elephant in connection with a story on the huge number of African elephants imported by Nautilus body building magnate Arthur Jones. The Leibel elephant had come from this herd.

Farnum Bros. Circus opened under a tent at Al G. Barnes' home town of Baldwin Park, California in May for a festival. It followed with a number of other fair and festival dates in the Golden State. The show used a 120 foot by 80 foot big top to house its hour and half performance. This one sometimes exhibited as a petting zoo. The Sterling Circus, owned by the Tom Wilds family of Mosier, Oregon played some fairs along their route, most notably the Oregon State Fair where they gave a 40 minute performance. The troupe also

had a number of indoor and shopping mall bookings. Scott's Continental Circus played fairs, festivals, malls and company picnics in Ontario. It gave a half hour performance and featured a petting zoo. Andy Swan's Swan Bros. Circus appeared at California fairs and festivals. John Winn's Europorama Circus played an eighteen day season along the west coast in June with Carol Marcan and her cats, the Flying Espanas, and Joe Frisco's elephants. An arena and grandstand show, it used two rings. Probably the smallest of the fair circuses, and here the line of what constituted a circus began to blur, was Bill Carpenter's Backyard Circus which carried only a few people. Its gimmick was to turn kids from the audience into the performers, and after a few minutes of tutoring presented the show. This concept, awesome in its simplicity, was clearly successful as Carpenter fielded six units, some of them at amusement parks.

Some showfolks produced only one or two fair dates during the year. Klein's Attractions had the Continental Circus at a fair in Berrien Springs, Michigan in August with Bobby Steele's bears, the Jordan's globe of death and Bobby Moore's elephants. The Carla Wallenda Aerial Thrill Circus was at a county fair in West Virginia in August with a gorilla parody, and a 110 foot high swaypole act. Jorge Barreda had the circus at October's Mississippi State Fair with Captain Circus, the human cannonball; the Flying Garcias, and his own lion act. Later he had the "March of Dimes" circus in Oklahoma, repeating a run he had in 1986. Wes Oler produced a grandstand circus at a fair in East Greenwich, Rhode Island in August. George Moffett put together the circus at a Bloomington, Illinois fair in late July with Killer Willard the boxing kangaroo and Phil and Francine Schacht's elephant Dondi.

Petting zoos were popular free attractions at fairs, festivals, promotional shows and malls. They were a throwback to the early days of the menagerie in America when foreign and domestic wild animals appeared behind taverns and in town squares. They were also a reflection of the urbanization of American society in which city and even small town kids no longer have the opportunity to associate with domesticated farm animals. Probably the leader of this branch of the business was the R. W. Commerford organization from Goshen, Connecticut which owned over 500 animals. It had a series of mall dates in the East in the winter and early spring. Starting in April three units hit the road to appear at 53 fairs. At Albany, New York in February the show exhibited 125 animals including elephants, a giraffe, camels, llamas, chickens, ducks, rabbits, goats, sheep, emus, zebras, monkeys, donkeys, buffalo, miniature horses, and a few kiddie rides. The animals moved behind three semi trailers. It also supplied several parks with petting zoos and even rented the Big Apple Circus some lead stock for its spec. The Bob Jones Petting Zoo had a number of mall and fair dates. Jones, a veteran of the George Hamid organization, appeared at the Ohio State Fair in August. It featured the usual barnyard animals, gave camel rides, and had Buffy the elephant who was acquired from Gary Johnson. Dave Hale had a petting zoo at the Hawaii State Fair and at the Great Circus Parade in Milwaukee, among other dates. He supplied a number of animals for the menagerie at the Circus World Museum including Tu-Tall (nee Gopher) the giraffe. Hale specialized in camels, owning the act trained and presented by Bobby Gibbs, and featuring camel rides in his show. Riders received a camel jockey's license which certified them as members of the American Camel Rider's Society. Joe Frisco Sr. toured a show called Showbiz Petting Zoo in the South. It included a short circus performance.



The Bob Jones Petting Zoo had a circusey flair at the Ohio State Fair in August. Fred Pfening, Jr. photo.

A few producers had short run still dates for a variety of sponsors. The most notable of these was the Borger-Berlin Circus at the Dupage County Fairgrounds at Wheaton, Illinois, an annual June date for the police produced by Norman Borger and Elton Berlin. A tented affair, Bobby Moore's elephants, and Andre Skarbeck's lions highlighted the exhibition. Frank Curry promoted Wendy's Super Circus at Nashville from February 27 to March 1. This orgy of commercialism had Wendy of hamburger fame introducing the acts, and included guest appearances by the Widgetts, Care Bears and GI Joe characters. Real performers in this arena show included Bill Morris and his elephants, Skarbecki and his lions, and the Tangier Arab tumbling troupe. Cannon master Hugo Zacchini was a feature on the bill. Curry, it will be recalled, had promoted the Ronald McDonald Circus in arenas and under canvas in past years. The American Showtime Circus, owned by Tom Lunsford, appeared at Riverview, Florida as a one ringer under canvas on April 13-14.

Circus Flora, which made a big splash in 1986, was less in evidence in 1987 as it appeared only in St. Louis from May 9-16. Produced by David Balding, the acts included Eric Braun and his dogs, the Flying Guttys, Sacha Pavlata working a cloud swing and horses, and the Tino Wallenda Zoppe high wire act. The Larsson Bros. Circus had some canvas dates in the fall. This one may have have been Allen Bros. under a different name as many of the acts were the same. The John Robinson Circus, produced by Lee Kolozel, appeared at a festival at Haines City, Florida in March with Bones Craig's elephants, and Pete Woods' wild animals under a Bruno big top. It reappeared in Kissimmee, Florida over Labor Day, and later did some corporate events. Le Gran Cirque D'Hiver appeared in Montreal from December 19 until Janaury 3, 1988. The Trampoline Guys, and Reitta and Debbie Wallenda on the high wire worked this date. This was a "new wave" circus using high tech sound and lighting and a strongly theatrical presentation. The Emmett Kelly Jr. Circus was in Caesars Palace in Lake Tahoe, Nevada in early August with Bobby Moore's dogs, Los Latinos' wire act, and David Balding and Flora the elephant. Veteran Parley Baer was ringmaster. Later in the month the show played Las Vegas.

School shows played an important role in the industry as they provided employment for hundreds of showfolk, and functioned as fund raising vehicles for civic and school groups. Operating on very small nuts, they were for the most part sponsored by organizations which had neither the manpower or resources to contract larger troupes. Often incorporating other forms of live entertaiment, usually magic, these small circuses were almost always one

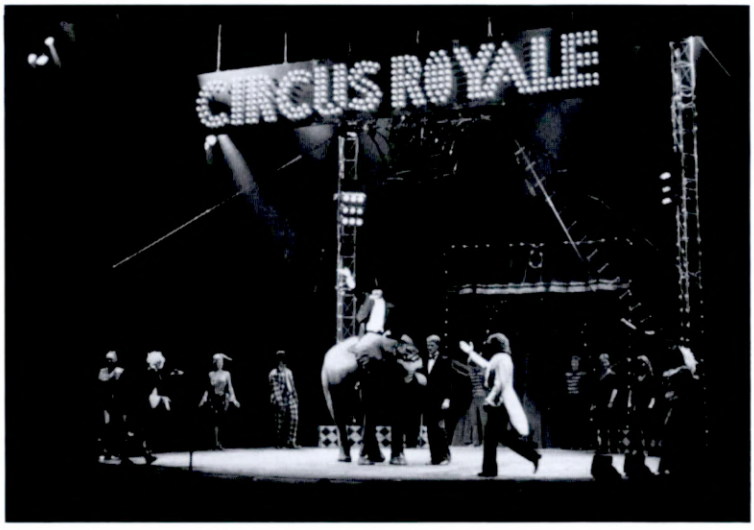
ring affairs catering to small town audiences. They filled the role of the two car shows at the beginning of this century, and before that, of the scores of tiny wagon circuses that played the crossroads in the 19th century.

Jimmy Cole's All Star TV Circus was the most venerable title of this type show. It opened its 50th season on February 7, and closed on March 28. The twelve person troupe appeared in its traditional New York and Pennsylvania territory, mostly for school groups such as the PTA and PTO. Billy Martin was the announcer, and Phil Chandler, Ron and Lee Dykes, and John "Egg-roll" Kane were also on the roster. Big John Strong was another well known name in this branch of the industry, fielding as many as three shows at once during the year. While his units toured mainly in the Southwest and West, they made appearances as far East as Ohio and Kentucky. One of Strong's troupes, called Big John's Variety Extravaganza opened at Barstow, Califonia on January 15 with Barry Yiengst, magician; Paul Morales, juggler; and Tom Tomashek, clown. Another show was called Clown Capades.

Jim Nordmark's International All Star Circus was another regular on the school show scene. He played from at least June to October in the East and Midwest. Bela Tabak, a veteran of the Toby Tyler Circus, presented two big crocodiles. In January, Nordmark won a lawsuit with a promoter which established that lists of phone taps and repeat contracts were corporate assets, an important legal victory for showmen who had built up public goodwill over the years.

Harry Dubsky's Circus Galaxy opened in mid-March and ran until at least the end of November, moving back and forth between the East, the Midwest and border states throughout the year. The performance included Harry James' one finger stand, Stephanie Chapman's single trapeze act, the Rianos duo on the slack wire, Gina Dubsky and her uncaged leopards and panthers, Ron and Pam Perry's juggling, magic, and a gorilla parody. Harry Von Zel was ringmaster, and Mearl Johnson handled the booking.

A high class addition to the world of small shows was former Hanneford and Big Apple executive John McConnell's Circus Royale which had its world premier at the U. S. Military Academy in West Point, New York on September 26. It played in the East and Midwest through at least the end of October, and resumed its tour in mid-Feburary 1988. The show melded the circus and magic in a more cohesive manner than had been done before. After the elephant act concluded, for example, the elephant vanished in a disappearance illusion. The show had excellent lighting, a fine band, and beautiful costumes, all of which appealed to the audiences in the college and university auditoriums where it often played. Acts included the Trampoline Guys and Lisa in a comedy routine; Mike and Tricia Philips, magic; Danuta, spider web; Debbie Chapman as Nyoka on web; Carla Zoppe Emerson with Flora the elephant, and Shimada, a Japanese illusionist. David Hibling was the ringmaster and magican. Rick Percy directed a five piece band.



John McConnell's Circus Royale was a combination magic and circus stage show. John Polacsek photo.

Al Stencell's Super Circus International played from April 30 to June 24 in Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland. This three ringer appeared in arenas, stadiums and ice rinks. The acts included Bill Morris and his elephants, Edward Steeples' bears and chimps, the Lucky Bros. in knockabout comedy, and Roberta Zerbini and her dogs. Stencell also exhibited at the Ottawa Exposition and at a fair in Thunder Bay, Ontario under a tent seating 1200. Bones Craig had his elephant at the Ottawa date, while the Winn Troupe, Fassetts' chimps and a boxing kangaroo were at Thunder Bay.

Ray McMahon had his Royal American Circus out in gyms, stages, and armories throughout the South. This one marched from at least May through September, with a single December date recorded in Little Rock. The Holiday Hippodrome, owned by Bill Garden, had a split tour in its 22nd season. The spring route ran from February 24 to June 15, and the fall-winter season went from September 8 until December 21. It gave its two hour performance in the East, Midwest, and South. Performing personnel included Floyd Bradbury who did magic, Irving Hall and his baboons, and Gary "Yo-Yo the Clown" Noel and his dog Popcorn. Jose Cole also had a split season. The spring itinerary began March 22 in Wisconsin and ended on May 31 in Minnesota. The fall tour went from at least mid-September until early October when the show appeared in Iowa and Minnesota. Acts included Miss Constance and three jaguars and Digger O'Dell, a boxing kangaroo.

It was a sad season for the James Hetzer's Intercontinental Circus as owner Hetzer died of a heart attack on June 19. The Huntington, West Virginia based show began its spring tour on March 28, concluding it on April 17, playing its usual dates in the Mountain State, and Southeastern Ohio. Feature acts included Mike Rice and his elephant, and Danuta and her spider web act. A four stand fall tour in West Virginia was under the direction of Hetzer's sister Mabel C. Hetzer and daughter Cathy Hetzer Rogers, best known as the singing ringmistress. Ron Bacon's Famous Cole Circus from Belpre, Ohio opened its fall season at Batesville, Indiana on October 18. The tour continued through November in Ohio and West Virginia. Veteran musician Charles Moyer led a three piece band. During the summer Bacon promoted a number of Kelly Miller dates in Ohio. Rudy Jacobi had a circus out in the fall, and toured a Christmas show in December.

Jim Russell's Peanut Circus toured from at least May through November in the South, Southwest, and West. Beck's Circorama, headed by Harry E. Beck Jr., was another armory and gym show. Its eight week southern route started on September 21. Joe Smiley was manager. Bill Brickle's Wonderland Circus Revue had some school dates in the South in January and February. The Royal Dragon Circus opened its seventeen week winter-spring tour in Dallas, Pennsylvania, and had another fourteen

weeks in the fall. This show was produced by P. J. Racht. The Toymakers Dream Circus appeared in a school gym in Pikesville, Kentucky on September 22.

Some smaller shows received little press and the extent of their tours, let alone details, was unknown. For example, a troupe called Show-A-Rama Circus appeared in a parking lot in Pikeville, Kentucky on September 20. The Taylor Family Shows had a five day engagment at a mall in Amherstburg, Ontario in March. Something called the British Comedy Circus appeared in Los Angeles in September. The Universal Circus appeared in Quebec and Ontario from May 1 to June 24. Marc Verreault was the producer and the performers included Joe Howarth and his chimps, Johnny Peers and his dogs, and the Napoleon Zamplerla riders. There was no indication if this was an indoor or outdoor show.

Some of these small troupes could be classified as "new wave" circuses. Make-A-Circus out of San Franisco played one dayers in California from June through September, and had extended runs in the Bay area in November and December. The summer tour featured a theatrical play called "Abou's Journey" which incorporated circus stunts such as juggling, fire eating, knife throwing, and trapeze. After intermission, children in attendance were taught a few basic circus skills which they then performed for the crowd. A similar program was given at the winter dates, the show being called "Little Nemo in Slumberland." Le Cirque Imaginaire appeared in Boston in September. The two person show, performed by Jean Baptiste Thieree and Victoria Chaplin, the daughter of Charles Chaplin, with assorted barnyard animals, presented circus and magic acts in an idiosyncratic manner which Boston theater reviewers loved. Stretching the boundaries of what was considered a circus to its extreme, performance artist Huck Snyder presented his show, entitled, "Circus," at a gallery in New York City in February. It mixed film and puppets with live action to bombard the senses with his vision of what a circus was. While this may have sounded like something a precocious ten year old created on a rainy Saturday afternoon, it was considered noteworthy enough to be covered by the *New York Times*.

Two circuses had strongly religious orientations. Nick Weber, a Jesuit priest, had his Royal Lichtenstein one ring sidewall circus on its 15th annual tour. The 75 minute presentation included juggling, rola bola, an escape artist and a clown. The menagerie had two spider monkeys, a pony, two dogs, and two parrots. They disposed of a bear that traveled with the show when he got too big to handle during the tour. The performance had mime fables which made ethical points, and the show made a pitch for world peace and brotherhood. Weber himself worked a horse named Dan Rice. This five or six person outfit played one nighters all over the country. The Circus Alleluia from the Calvary Temple near Tampa, Florida was a similar show as circus acts were used as object lessons to teach the word of God. It played auditoriums, gyms, and large churches in the Southern and Eastern part of the country. Directed by Bill Greeman, the company moved on one show owned truck.

Some outfits which were really ice, variety, magic or Santa Claus shows, used the word "circus" in their title, and often included traditional sawdust acts. These included Circus on Ice which had the Valentino Bros. trampoline act, Circus-Capades USA which appeared in Georgia in May, the Barry Yiengst Magic Circus, and others. They were for the most part fund raising vehicles for small town civic organizations.



The Royal Lichtenstein was one of two religiously oriented circuses on tour. Photo taken at Reading, Pennsylvania on October 10. George Bingaman photo.

Circuses maintained their presence at amusement and theme parks. Tommy Hanneford's involvement at two parks has been noted previously. Disneyland had Circus Fantasy from March 7 until April 26 with the Posso Bros. on the high wire, one of Douglas MacValley's globes of death, and lots of clowns including ex-Big Apple star Barry Lubin. In the fall Disneyworld's Epcot Center had the Daredevil Circus Spectacular with the Cristiani elephants and a Winn skycycle. Canada's Parc Safari had a circus from May through September with Lee Stevens and his seal lions, Roy and Elaine Wells with the Cuneo elephants, and John Cox and the Cueno white tiger act.

The Baraboo-Wisconsin Dells area was a hotbed of circus activity over the summer. Jim Gorgan's Dells Crossroads park had circus acts including Ken Benson and Roxy the elephant, and Zachary's gaucho act. Peter Sturgis was announcer. The Tommy Bartlett show at the Dells had the Nerveless Nocks, ex-Ringling-Barnum juggler Dieter Tasso, and a sky cycle act. The Circus World Museum had the Great Wallendas, Bobby and Rosa Gibbs' camel act, Ben Williams and Anna May the elephant, Jim and Tepa Hall's bears, Karen Lowande on the single trapeze, Carla Zoppe Emerson on web, Jim Williams as Happy the clown, and Lancelot the unicorn on loan from Ringling-Barnum presented by Kathy Hayes. Rick Percy directed the band, and Bill Metzger was the ringmaster. It was an excellent year for the Baraboo attraction as attendance was up about 20%.

The youth circus was alive and well in 1987. The Wenatchee Youth Circus toured Washington, Montana, and Idaho from at least mid-June until August 21. Sarasota's Sailor Circus gave its annual show in April. It was the 40th year for the Florida State University Flying High Circus. During the school year this troupe had about fifteen off-campus bookings at private parties and festivals, plus about five performances at the school. In May they went to Nassau. The Flying High Circus appeared at Callaway Gardens in Georgia for the 27th year from early June through Labor Day under a 120 foot round top tent with three 40 foot middle sections. Six of the nine acts were in the air. The amateur circus held in conjunction with Peru's Circus City Festival was conducted in July.

Bruce Pfeffer's Circus of the Kids set up shop to teach children circus tricks at various locations in New York and Massachusetts during the summer. The curriculum included a performance by the children before an audience. In Vermont, a two week summer camp taught children circus skills, then took them on a three town tour under a tent which sat about 350. Headed by Robin Mermin the show was called Circus Smirkus. The fifteen performers, all between 10 and 15 years old, had to audition to

be accepted at the camp. In New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut a non-profit organization called the Circus Education Specialists appeared at hundreds of schools to demonstrate and teach circus skills as a non-competitive way to enhance physical skills. The Great Y Circus from Redlands, California, under the direction of Warren Wood, didn't go out in 1987 because of prohibitive liability insurance costs. Many circus performers found work at trade shows, sports shows, corporate affairs and promotions, and in the casinos of Nevada and Atlantic City. Las Vegas was a major circus center as the Circus Circus Casino featured acts all day long, and many other reviews had circus components in them. The Siegfried & Roy show, produced by Kenneth Feld, and the Bobby Berosini monkey show, both of which contained strong circus elements, continued as pillers of the Vegas show business community.

Showfolks held a number of benefit performances for good causes during the year. In January, a circus was conducted under Allan Hill's big top in conjunction with the Great Sarasota Circus Parade. Later that month the 4th annual circus was held in Gibsonton, Florida, again using Hill's tent. John Herriott was equestrian director, and Ben Williams presented the elephants. In the spring the Paul Eagles Circus Luncheon Club presented their annual one ring circus at Rancho Los Amigos Hospital in Downey, California. Kari and Gary Johnson had their elephant at this one. The Sarasota Showfolks Circus was held on December 12 with Kay Rosaire's cage act, and the Flores family among the performers. Chalres Schlarbaum led a fourteen piece band. John Pugh and Cliff Vargas were in attendance.

The Beijing Acrobats toured the country in 1987. Some of the performers were former winners at the Monte Carlo Circus Festival. The Chinese Magic Circus from Taiwan was in San Francisco for its annual December engagement with acrobatics, plate spinning, and gymnastics. The Chinese Children's Palace, in which 10 to 18 year olds from the People's Republic presented a program of juggling, balancing and acrobatics, played various cities. Russia's Moscow Circus made a nine city tour of Canada which opened in Halifax in September and closed in Vancouver in November. Acts included high wire, trained bears, comedy perch pole, cossack and bareback riding, and a juggling strong man. July's Great Circus Parade in Milwaukee was a great success featuring 75 of the Circus World Mueum's wagons. New units included the rebuilt Al G. Barnes elephant wagon pulled by a team of Bobby Moore's elephants, and a fantastic equestrian display which recreated the Field of the Cloth of Gold spec from the Ringling show early in the century. The Ringling giraffe den made the parade less its passenger as the museum's giraffe died only days before. In January the Great Sarasota Circus Parade was held for the second time with wagons from Allan Hill, the Ringling Museum, and John Zweifel. An estimated 25,000 viewed the event. A week of festivities preceeded the march which was highlighted by Zweifel's Two Hemispheres bandwagon. Unfortunately, the affair left its organizers with a large debt which led to a restructuring of the Sarasota Circus Foundation, the sponsoring organization, late in the year. In other Sarasota news, it was announced in May that a Ring of Fame, similar to Hollywood's Walk of Fame, would be created to honor circus greats. The first inductees were Merle Evans, Lou Jacobs, Cylde Beatty, the Wallenda Troupe, John Ringling North and Art Concello. The administration of the Ringling Museum came under criticism from circus groups and others. Showfolks complained that the circus portion of the museum complex was being neglected.



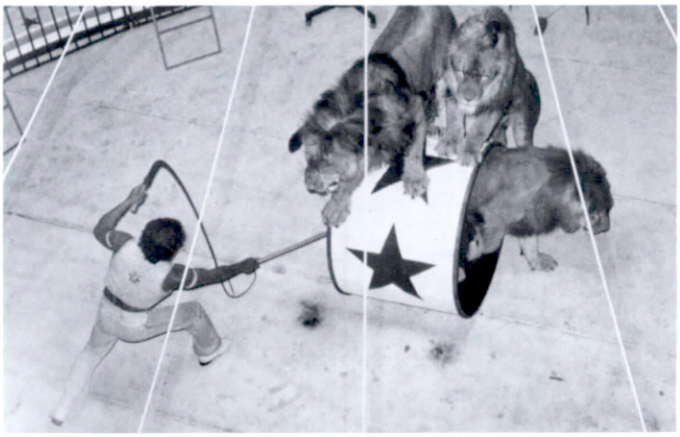
The Coronas Circus played the Yaarab Temple Shrine date from April 10-19 in Marietta, Georgia. Joe Bradbury photo.

In other circus news, the history of the circus was presented in Lexington, Massachusetts from April to August, giving the public a look at some ancient showbills from the American Antiquarian Society. In November, Yale's Peabody Museum exhibited "The Showman and the Scientist: P. T. Barnum and O. C. Marsh as Collectors" which recalled Barnum's contribution to natural science. Howard Tibbals' magnificent model circus was on display in Rochester, New York for much of the year. A Clown Hall of Fame opened in Delavan, Wisconsin during the summer in a store front. Its goal was to raise $500,000 over the next three years for its own building. A major group of circus, wild west and theatrical posters, most of which were duplicates from the Circus World Museum, were auctioned in New York City in May. A lesser but still significant group of lithographs went on the block at Saratoga Springs, New York in September. New inductees into Peru, Indiana's Circus Hall of Fame were Mickey King, Bette Leonard, Irvin Feld, Bertram Mills, and Karl Arnett.

Jerry Collins, former owner of the Beatty-Cole Circus, was in the news early in the year when he contributed over a million dollars to television preacher Oral Roberts. Roberts had said he would be struck dead if money was not raised for his church and university. Collins said he cared little about Roberts or the cause, stating he gave the money to be "sure he doesn't have to commit hara-kiri now." The end did come for the venerable Benson's Wild Animal Park, called New England Playworld in its last years, as its contents were auctioned off on October 23-24. In all, 400 animals went on the block. The Circus World Museum was high bidder on the old Bostock bandwagon, while its companion vehicle, a European living caravan, went to a New England carriage museum. The park was started in 1922 by John Benson, the American agent for the German animal dealer Carl Hagenbeck. The popular "Circus of the Stars" was televised for the 12th time in December. Actress-dancer Juliet Prowse was injuried when she was bitten on the neck by a leopard owned by Jilda Cristiani.

Deaths during the year included: Lorraine Valentine, trapeze artist with the Flying Valentinos; Roland Tieber, veteran seal trainer; Ludwig Maschino, ex-Ringling-Barnum acrobat and co-founder of Showfolks of Sarasota; Harold "Happy" Kellems, well known clown; Arvel Allread, former show owner; Chang Reynolds, circus historian; Jesse Jessen, Carson and Barnes agent; Michael Burke, one time Ringling-

Barnum general manager; Ermide Cristiani Loyal, member of two great riding acts; Charlie Borza, ex-Ringling-Barnum tampoline performer; James T. Hetzer, Ohio Valley circus producer; Harry Shell, circus musician and calliope technician, Wilbur Deppe, owner of the circus at Circus World Museum in the 1960s; Cy Murray, cookhouse operator; Pedro Morales, Sr., veteran performer; David B. Wharton, former show owner; Johnny Zoppe Sr., member of famous riding family; Ray Chandler, veteran camel and elephant hand; Judy Elliott, senior marketing director for Beatty-Cole; Willie Lamberti, former member of the Gretona high wire act; Sonny Burdett, veteran performer; Bob Gollmar, scion of famous circus family and a founder of the Circus World Museum; Chad Ballard, son of Ed Ballard of American Circus Corporation fame; Ortans Canestrelli, member of Cristiani riding family and first woman to do a triple backward somersault from a teeterboard; Elsie Jung Turner, widow of producing clown Paul Jung; Oscar Cristiani, member of famous circus family; Roger Littleford, former *Billboard* editor and grandson of magazine's founder; and Merle Evans, legend.



Jorge Barreda and his lion act performed at a number of 1987 Shrine circus dates. Royal Hanneford Circus photo.

This survey was the beneficiary of the kindness of strangers and friends who sent me clippings, photos, photo copies, information and impressions of the 1987 season. I am grateful to them all. While this overview doubtless contains many errors of omission and comission, much of its merit comes from their contributions. They include: George Bingaman, Jack Bennett, Paul Binder, Anne Bondarenko, Joe Bradbury, Arnold Brito, Buddy Calhoun, Jerry Cash, Henry Chalfant, Tex Copeland, Fred Dahlinger, Ron Doerring, Bill Elbirn, Dick Flint, Hank Fraser, Mort Gamble, John Goodall, Albert House, Paul Ingrassia, Don James, Edward L. Jones, Blake Kellogg, John Lenker, John Lentz, Robert Lessard, Linda Mickleborough, David Orr, Tom Parkinson, Fred D. Pfening Jr., John Polacsek, J. Scott Pyles, Tommie Randolph, Richard J. Reynolds III, Bill Rhodes, Hon. Dale Riker, Hon. Evelyn Riker, Holton Rower, Ron Sanford, A. H. Saxon, Mike Sporrer, Al Stencell, John Still, LeRoy Sweetland, Frank Thompson, Karen Thomson, Bill Watson, Warren Wood and Buckles Woodcock. My apologies if I have missed anyone. As always special note must be made of Don Marcks' *Circus Report*, without which this overview would not be possible. Other periodicals consulted were *White Tops*, *Amusement Business*, the *Showfolks of Sarasota Newsletter*, and various CFA tent and top publications.

BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS



The Engford Family Show, out of Plover, Wisconsin, was one of the pioneer motorized circuses. Owned by Robert Engford, the show toured from 1920 to 1926. The female buglers on this letterhead are in blue; the title, lettering and scrollwork are in red. The Engford Show is probably best remembered today by its air calliope truck which resides at the Circus World Museum.

MERLE EVANS:
HIS FINAL INTERVIEW

REPORTED BY JOHN LENTZ

Editorial Note: This interview is the result of many visits I had with Merle Evans during the latter months of 1987. Although I had known him previously, it was during these visits that we became good friends. Only three day before he was stricken, Merle read this interview and looked forward to its being published in this journal. It appears here without any changes or precisely as he would have read it had he lived to do so.

Speaking of Charles Ringling, he said: "There was never a finer man." And I can say in tribute to my friend: There was never a finer man than Merle Evans.



Merle Evans loved to be a part of the Great Circus Parade in Milwaukee, Wisconsin each year. This photo was taken there in 1985. Orin C. King photo.

We met in Merle's home where he lives alone nowadays save for his jolly poodle named "Poo." Throughout the house there are photos, paintings, scrolls and testimonials that attest his remarkable career and, more important, the esteem in which he is held.

Now, nearing age 96, he is still active, still keen of mind and still filled with a zest for life. "Maybe I will make it to 100," he says, "just like those oldsters you see on TV with Willard Scott. Might have enough wind left for a toot or two."

The story of his life (did you know that his real name is Murrell Slease Evans?) has been told so often that most readers of *Bandwagon* know it from A to Z or from carnival to showboats to the Wild West of Buffalo Bill and finally to the circuses of the Ringlings and Bertram Mills. So, I suggested that we limit our conversations to the personalities he has known throughout his long career; that he tell me about the performers, managers and others who stand out in his memory. "All right," he agreed, "might as well start with the Ringlings. Spent 50 years with them."

The Ringlings. When I joined out in 1919, three of the brothers were still with it. Alf, Charlie and John. Met Alf only once when he came on the show for a visit. His health was failing. So, we made special arrangements for him to see the show. Took out a section of the seats and parked his car in the empty space. We all put our best into that performance. Like Alf might never see the circus again. Think we would have been good friends for we were fellow cornet players. Charlie? He was my man. So genial, so friendly. Never too busy to stop and talk things over. And he was always interested in the band. Making it bigger and better. I came to Sarasota at his request way back in 1920. He had plans to give band concerts at all sorts of events. Started out with a band of 18 and built it up to 25 men. I remember playing for street dances. Covered the street with lots of cornmeal. Made a fine surface for the dancers. Sarasota was a high-grass town back then. The dances and concerts were the liveliest doings in town. Yes, there was never a finer man than Charlie Ringling. The most down-to-earth of all the brothers. I was honored to be one of his pallbearers. Mrs. Charlie was a lovely person, too. I hand many dinners on their private car and afterwards we played 40 to 50 minutes. Charlie on the violin, Mrs. Ringling on the organ, I on the cornet. But what I remember most about Mrs. Charlie is her doughnuts. The best ever made. Whenever she cooked up a fresh batch, she had me stop by the "Symphonia" for my handout. You don't meet many folks like them.

John Ringling. He was a business man. All business. No time for chewing the fat. Always dressed like he was going to see his bankers. Never got on easy terms with him although he did loosen up enough to call me "Merlie." Think he was closer to Fred Bradna than anyone else on the show. In some ways they were alike. One season, 1926 I believe, John came up with big plans for the band. Forty men and a



Lillian Leitzel, Evans' favorite, in her dressing tent on the Ringling-Barnum Circus in the 1920s. Pfening Archives.



Evans greatly admired Bird Millman, "Queen of the Silver Wire." Pfening Archives.



Jennie Rooney, the most beautiful of the circus ladies, according to Evans. Pfening Archives.

lady soloist. Nothing came of it. Now and then, my wife and I dropped by John's mansion. We loved the grounds, trees, flowers and gardens. Mrs. Ringling was always friendly, never put on airs. One day when we visited, she was busy fixing up a monkey cage. She loved animals. When on the show, you'd find her in the menagerie.

The Norths. John and Henry were my good friends. I knew John from his first day on the circus when he bunked in my car. Years later when he ran the show and entertained New York and Hollywood big shots, I got asked to some of his parties. The pace was too much for me and I always begged off early. Johnny usually urged me to stay. But I'd tell him, look Johnny, I've two shows to do tomorrow while you sleep. He had his faults. But I think he did a good job of carrying on the Ringling traditions. Even now, you won't see specs as lavish and beautiful as "Old King Cole" and "Holidays."

About Henry, well, no one around the show in my time was as popular. If he had any enemies I never heard of them. Though John was the boss, Henry deserves credit for keeping the show on the road during some fairly tough times. And he never forgets old friends. Comes to see me every time he returns to Sarasota.

Sam Gumpertz. I guess he was a pretty good manager even if he wasn't well liked, especially among the old-timers. They called him "The Gump." He had poor eyesight, but nothing much escaped him. If something in spec looked shabby, he saw it. And if any guys on the front door showed up in muddy shoes or dirty uniforms, Gumpertz got on their tails. We got along well enough. But I was glad when a Ringling was back in the office wagon.

Irvin Feld. I spent only two or three years on the show after he got control. We hit it off well enough. When he wanted to make changes in the music, he took time to explain why. Gave me no orders at all. He did a lot of good for the circus. But I don't agree that Feld alone saved the show. As long as you had the title of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, well, any good showman could have made a success of it. I'm glad that I was around under Feld's management. But I soon realized that the circus was changing and that the time had come for me to leave. No, I don't miss the life though I still love it. I've had a ball in retirement doing concerts throughout the country with folks who really love old-time circus music.

Buffalo Bill. I knew him only in his later years on the 101 Ranch. Age had slowed him down, but he was still a great showman. Kids loved him. As soon as our cars were spotted, they all crowded around yelling and waiting for Buffalo Bill to come out. Made so much noise that the rest of us couldn't sleep. When the Colonel got up, first thing he did was get in his surrey and head for the barber shop. Got the works there. Always told the barber to lay off sweet smelling toilet water. Wanted nothing but talcum powder on his face. He put away more liquor than anyone I ever knew. But even when tipsy, he was a nice old man.

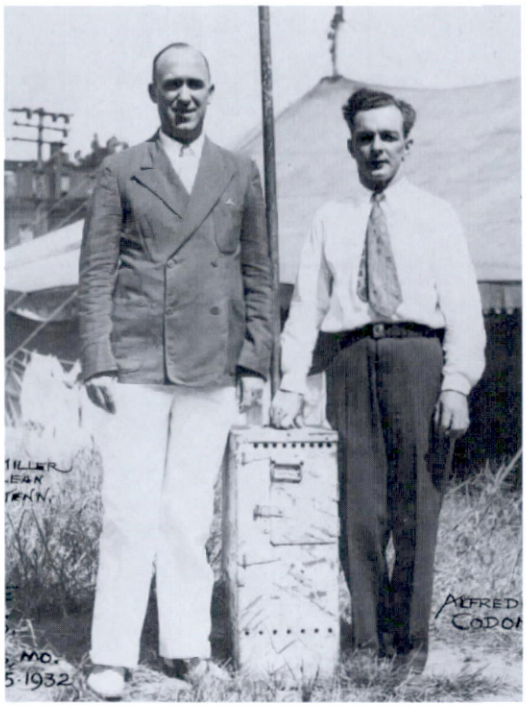
Lillian Leitzel. Thinking of her reminds me of "The Crimson Pedal," the waltz we always played when she was on. After her death, I vowed never to use it again for any other act. I kept that vow until last November during a concert in Sarasota. I conducted "The Crimson Pedal" for the first time in almost sixty years. Took me back to the old days. In my mind's eye, I saw Leitzel again. High up in the big top dazzling the towners like she always did. Incidentally, Leitzel knew how much the band, especially the drummers, contributed to her act. Now and then, she'd slip them $20 tips. Never knew how much scratch she made. But I can vouch for her generosity including gifts to me. Ties, robes and what not.

Oh, I could tell you a thousand stories about Leitzel. Like this one I haven't told before. Back in 1919 or 20, her husband Clyde Ingalls and I sailed for dates overseas. The ocean was plenty rough. Got so sick I wanted to die. She was just as bad off. Said we should take care of each other. Made me move from my cabin to her stateroom. Well, for four nights, I was her room mate. And I swear there was no hanky-panky. Clyde didn't mind my bunking with his wife. Gave him time off to chase other women. He was always on the prowl for new dames. Never understood why Leitzel got hooked on him. She so outclassed him. But I'll say this for Ingalls. When it came to announcing or making an outside bally, he had no equal then or now.

Next to Leitzel, I was stuck on Bird Millman and Jennie Rooney. Bird for her performance on the wire and her beauty. But for looks alone, well, Jenny was the most beautiful of all our circus ladies.

Alfredo Codona. Another close friend and by far the greatest of all flyers. Greater than Art Concello, good as Art was before he got the bug to own or manage a circus. Codona had it all. The build, the looks, the style. Never tired of playing for him and watching him. The circus will never have another Codona.

P. G. Lowery. You know he had



Evans posed with his friend Alfredo Codona on Ringling-Barnum in 1932. John Lentz collection.

the sideshow band on Ringling for many years. Boy, could he blow that horn! A first-rate musician. And the first black man to graduate from the New England Conservatory of Music. When he and his gang blasted off for the bally, well, that was sure enough windjammin'.

Fred Bradna. If ever a man looked and acted like the ideal equestrain director, Fred was it. That made him a great asset to the show to say nothing of his fluency in so many foreign languages. Ladies everywhere took a fancy to him and he could sweet talk them like nobody else. He and Ella were my pals for many years.

Clyde Beatty. Knew him mostly from the Shrine dates we played. Never let fame go to his head. One time he came out of the cage soaked with perspiration. Asked him how much longer he intended to work the act. Just as long as I get my kicks out of it, he said. Clyde knew I liked a sip of rum now and then. So, when ever he played Cuba, he smuggled out a case for me.

Bertram Mills. Every inch the gentleman. Ran a classy circus. A one-ringer. But every act top-notch along with a great 28 piece band. Liked the English audiences. Real circus fans. And I enjoyed the social life we had over there. Imagine a Kansas hay seed like me lunching with the Lord Mayor of London! I still hear from members of the Mills family.

The Clowns. Some of my best buddies were in Clown Alley. Emmett Kelly and I were both from Kansas and we shared a dressing room every year in the Garden. So we had a lot in common. He started at the bottom and made it to the top. Otto Griebling, Paul Jung, Felix Adler, Prince Paul, Frankie Saluto--they don't make 'em like that anymore. Lou Jacobs was and still is the best of his kind. Lou wasn't as much of a cut up as the others. Seemed like he was always had his mind on trying out new gags. It was a lively bunch. Some of the pranks they played on each other were funnier than what they did in the show.

People of the Sideshow. To me, they were just as important and just as human as the rest of us on the show. I knew them all from the giants to the midgets. Never had a better friend than Frieda Pushnick, the little armless and legless girl. Still keep in touch with her. Had some great attractions in the sideshow. Cliko, the bushman, a circus in himself. The Ubangi Women. One of them, you know, took a shine to me. Got a lot of ribbing about it. Eko and Iko. Called them "Ambassadors from Mars." And they sure looked like it. I had friends, too, among the workingmen. One I remember best was Chicken Charlie, the outside porter who took care of the honey buckets. Always sported a vest.

(JL) Okay, Merle, let me interrupt you with some questions. When you look back over your years in the business, what gave you your greatest thrill?

Frieda Pushnick, Merle Evans good friend in the Ringling Barnum sideshow. Pfening Archives.



(ME) Opening nights each season in the Garden. When the doors opened, when the spots went on, when we struck up the fanfare, well, there was never a bigger thrill for me. Nothing else throughout the season came close to it.

(JL) And what were the low points?

(ME) The Hartford fire. Worst thing ever in all my years of trouping. Next to the fire, the worst day for me was when the show folded under canvas.

(JL) Tell me one of your favorite anecdotes.

(ME) Well, when I was on the Cotton Blossom showboat, they tried to turn me into an actor. Memorized my lines. Went on one night and blew every damn one of them. Swore off acting forever. Went back to my cornet where I belonged.

(JL) Anything you haven't done that you'd like to do?

(ME) Maybe a concert in Carnegie Hall. Get my windjammers on the stage and revive all the old-time favorites like "The Battle of Shiloh." Play everything but Stravinsky's "Elephant Polka." Paid $1,500 for that score. I hated it. The band hated it. And the elephants hated it. Finally gave the music to the Sarasota Opera Company.

(JL) What do you miss most in today's performances?

(ME) Center ring talent. Sure, some great performers are still around like Gunther Gebel-Williams. But since when have you seen tight-wire artists like Bird Millman and Con Colleano? Or Dorothy Herbert on her rearing horse? Or bareback troupes like the Cristianis and the Hannefords?

(JL) If you could live your life over again, would you do something different?

(ME) Absolutely not. I'd do it all over again even though there were times when I first started out when I didn't have enough change for a haircut. What I've seen, the places I've been, the experiences I've had and the wonderful people I've known . . . yes, sir, it has been a life that I would want to live all over again.

Chronology of Merle Evans' career.

1909 S. W. Brundage Carnival.

1910 Cotton Blossom Showboat.

1911-12 Murphy's Comedians, Pullen's Comedians and other tent shows.

1913-15 S. W. Brundage Carnival.

1916-17 101 Ranch Wild West.

1918 Gus Hill's Minstrels.

1919-1969 Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

1920-21 Bertram Mills Circus (winter dates).

Died December 31, 1987.

JOHN ROBINSON CIRCUS

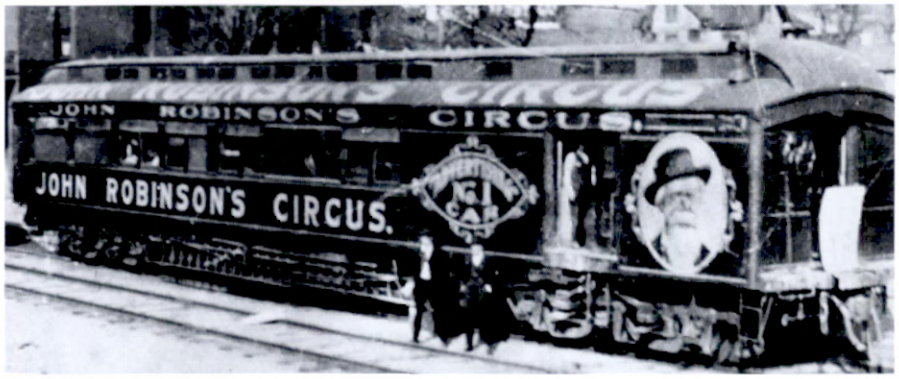
Season of 1921 Part One

By Joseph T. Bradbury

Foreword: At the conclusion of the 1929 John Robinson article printed in the July-August 1987 Bandwagon *it was mentioned that the author would next back track to the early 1920's to continue the story of this show. This new series will cover and the 1921 and 1922 seasons and will be printed in two sections. A major objective of these articles will be to point out that John Robinson used basically different equipment in those years than that carried during the 1923-29 seasons which have been covered earlier in* Bandwagon.

The winter of 1920-21 was one of the most important in the careers of Messers. Jerry Mugivan, Bert Bowers, and Edward Ballard who had operated as a syndicate since 1919. Later the trio organized the American Circus Corporation under which all of their circuses would operate. Each show had its own management but all were under the general direction of the syndicate.

In 1920 the trio fielded three circuses, John Robinson, under the direct management of Jerry Mugivan; Hagenbeck-Wallace under Bert Bowers; and Howes Great London with C.D. (Danny) Odom, manager. Robinson and Hagenbeck-Wallace were on 30 cars each while Howes Great London used 15. Edward Ballard was not active in the management of any of their shows but conducted numerous other business ventures from his home and office in West Baden, Indiana. Both Mugivan and Bowers established homes in Peru, Indiana.



Advertising car No. 1, John Robinson Circus, season of 1921. Pfening Archives.

In late 1920 two additional circuses were acquired. The syndicate purchased the Sells-Floto Circus along with that show's winter quarters property in Denver, Colorado from owners Bonfils and Tammen, and the Yankee Robinson Circus which Fred Buchanan had operated for a number of years. Some confusion exists over the details of the Yankee Robinson purchase. Mugivan in the celebrated interview he granted Frank Braden which was published in *Billboard* in 1921 said the show was bought from William P. Hall but accounts in the trade publications at the time of the sale say it was sold by Fred Buchanan. Either Hall had acted as an agent in the transaction or acquired the Yankee Robinson show from Buchanan then immediately turned around and sold it. In any event the show was a new property for Mugivan and his associates.

The Sells-Floto show returned to its regular quarters in Denver and the Yankee Robinson Circus, as well as the syndicates' 15 car Howes Great London Show, were sent to winter at William P. Hall's place in Lancaster, Missouri. During the winter the best property from both shows was used to frame a 25 car show going out in 1921 under



John Robinson Circus on the Cleveland, Ohio Lake Front lot, May 27-28, 1921. A full description of the photo appears in the text. Frank Pouska collection.



John Robinson open air menagerie. Exact date is uncertain but it was either 1921-1922 and pictures the cages the show had during those years. Note the octagon shaped monkey cage at left and coaches in rear with title on both letterboards above windows and on roof. Joe Bradbury collection.

the title of Howes Great London Show and Van Amburgh's Trained Wild Animals. Excess equipment was sold to the new Palmer Bros. Circus being framed at San Antonio, Texas.

Upon conclusion of the 1920 season Hagenbeck-Wallace returned to its regular quarters located on Edward Ballard's property in West Baden while John Robinson headed to Peru, Indiana and used quarters rented from B.E. Wallace. The show had been there the previous winter and Mugivan and Bowers had used the Wallace Farms to quarter one of their shows in the past.

So as preparations for the new 1921 season began Mugivan and his partners had circuses quartered at four different locales, Peru and West Baden, Indiana; Lancaster, Missouri; and Denver, Colorado. For the first time ever the Mugivan group would put four circuses on the road. These included John Robinson on 30 cars with Jerry Mugivan, manager; Hagenbeck-Wallace on 30 cars with Bert Bowers, manager; Sells-Floto on 30 cars with Zack Terrell, manager; and Howes Great London and Van Amburgh's on 25 cars with C.D. (Danny) Odom, manager.

During the several weeks the four shows were being readied for the road there was some shifting back and forth among them of both animals and equipment, especially between Lancaster and Denver.

Even with four circuses going out Mugivan still had considerable excess equipment on hand and in a large advertisement in the Jan 1, 1921 *Billboard* the following was offered for sale: 10 60 ft. flats, 3 50 ft. flats, 2 50 ft. stock cars, 2 60 ft. stock cars, 1 60 ft. box car, 1 55 ft. box car, 4 advance cars, 1 private car, 1 stateroom car, 1 workingmen's sleeper, 1 privilege car. Baggage wagons, cages, tableaux, steam calliope etc. Those interested were invited to contact John Robinson Circus, Peru, Indiana.

During the early weeks of 1921 the *Billboard* accounts often lumped all Mugivan show activities into a single article. For example the February 5, 1921 *Billboard* headed its coverage, "ACTIVITIES of Mugivan-Bowers Enterprises" and the article noted that Sells-Floto Circus elephant herd had been increased by three new bulls--Mary, Kate and Young Snyder--which arrived at the winterquarters in Denver last week. There were now four elephants in the middle ring act and three elephants in each of the end rings. The pachydermic performers were: Floto, Mama, Frieda, Trilby, Kas, Mo, Mary, Kate, Young Snyder and Billy Sunday.

The piece continued saying that in Washington, D.C. last week Bert Rutherford purchased for Howe's Great London Circus and Van Amburg's Trained Wild Animal Show "Little Vic," the 600 pound hippopotamus born last May in the Washington Zoo. The baby was to be expressed to the Howe-Van Amburg winter quarters at Lancaster, Missouri by way of Chicago. "Little Vic" later grew into the tremendous "Big Victor."

Other notes said Messers Mugivan and Bowers recently purchased for Sells-Floto seven new 70 ft. steel sleepers, electric lighted; a performers steel diner and a working men's steel diner, also electric lighted, from Hotchkiss, Blue & Co. The cost of the sleepers was $44,000. The article said that in addition to these cars some nine new 70 ft. steel flat cars and three new steel stock cars and a new steel advertising car, 70 ft. long and electric lighted, had been purchased for Sells-Floto. Some of these cars possibly may have been delivered to Sells-Floto in time for the 1921 season; however, the new Keith built flats didn't arrived until 1922.

Hagenbeck-Wallace purchased 14 new 70 ft. steel flats, one 70 ft. steel elephant car and six 70 ft. stock cars. These flat cars came from Mt. Vernon and were delivered to Hagenbeck-Wallace for the 1921 season. Other cars for Hagenbeck-Wallace included a new steel stateroom car and a new steel performers sleeper. Hagenbeck-Wallace also had been equipped with Curtis patent seat wagons and two troupes of performing hybrids had been added to the show's animal acts. There were seven animals in each group.

John Robinson was not completely



left out of the new car acquisitions. The article mentioned that the show had received a new steel 70 ft. performers sleeper purchased from Hotchkiss, Blue & Company.

A final notation said that the Sells-Floto big top for 1921 would be a 150 ft. round top with three 50's and two 30's which required an extra spool wagon which was ready at Denver.

The reader is advised that even though these sleeping cars were said to be "steel" construction, in reality they should be classified as "semisteel." The sides were still made of wood and supporting truss rods were used beneath the cars. The solid steel cars did not begin arriving until a few years later and at first these were available only for the first class passenger trains, the so called Limiteds or Specials.

Very little appeared in the trade publications until almost opening day in April concerning John Robinson's preparation for the new season. A brief note in January said that Spider Green would be the show's chef for the 1921 tour and a few weeks later it was announced that Arthur Gibson would be superintendent of tickets. Most of the news items in the *Billboard* were about the new 25 car Howes Great London-Van Amburgh show which would open in Albuquerque, New Mexico about March 21 and would head for the west coast where an early confrontation with the Al G. Barnes Circus was expected. Barnes would be ready for the fight and planned to open on March 8 and beat the Howes show into a number of towns. The two shows would soon engage in a real old time circus war up the coast and this would be major news in the trade publications during the early weeks of the 1921 season.

The March 12, 1921 *Billboard* carried this interesting advertisement: "John Robinson Circus Wants. Two experienced Knox Tractor Drivers. Must be capable of overhauling and keeping machines in repair. Address John Robinson Circus, Peru, Ind." Thus this ad informs the later day circus researcher that the make of the show's two tractors was Knox.

A week later the *Billboard* had a full page advertisement of the United States Tent & Awning Co. of Chicago, Illinois. The ad informed that



Snake den No. 37 on Robinson lot in Memphis, Tennessee September 12, 1921. Ralph Miller photo in Joe Bradbury collection.

"Outfits of Tents and Side Show Banners for Season 1921 Completed for: John Robinson's Circus, Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, Howe's Great London Circus, Sparks World's Famous Shows, and Palmer Bros. Big 3 Ring Wild Animal Circus." Such a large order from the Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard syndicate to supply the tent and banner needs for all of their four circuses was indeed a plum for the Chicago firm headed by its president Edward P. Neumann.

In late March an account in *Billboard* said that the Findlay, Ohio city council voted to charge the show no license fee when the John Robinson Circus was to exhibit there on June 21. John Robinson had refused to come unless the fee was remitted. The city had had no circus for the last five years, and the Chamber of Commerce was active in the negotiations with representatives of the show. Although the amount of the license was not mentioned evidently it was excessive.

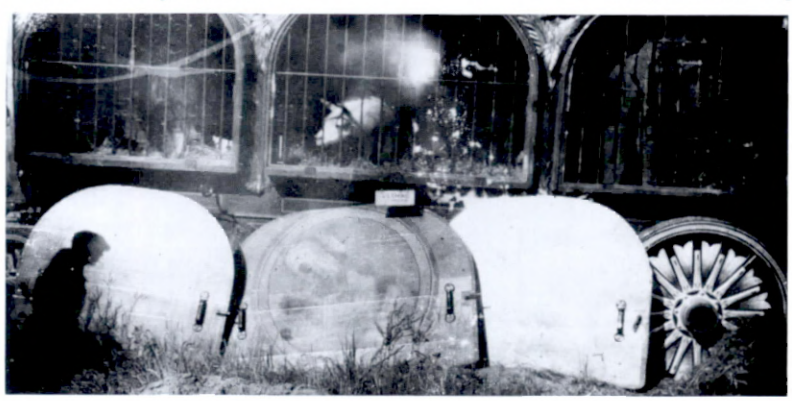
A sad event occurred in the circus world on April 8, 1921 when Benjamin E. Wallace died. He was as well known as any showman in the country and had remained active in the business even after selling his Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in 1913. He owned some 3,600 acres of land near Peru, Indiana which included the portion upon which was located the circus winter quarters where John Robinson was housed. How much rental was paid to Wallace for use of the quarters is not known to the author. Mugivan and his partners had sought to purchase the property being rented but old Ben had often been quoted that he would never sell an acre of land as long as he lived. In addition to real estate Wallace also had considerable financial holdings as well as a sizeable amount of circus properties, in particularly baggage wagons, parade vehicles, and cages that had come from the old John Robinson Ten Big Shows, plunder which he had purchased from Mugivan and Bowers in 1916. For a number of years Wallace had rented and sold circus equipment to a variety of showmen.

The April 30, 1921 *Billboard* carried an article headed, "JOHN ROBINSON CIRCUS. Ready To Hit The Trail" which said that things were humming at winter quarters and the tenting season would be inaugurated at Peru on Saturday, April 30. Manager Jerry Mugivan was personally at quarters getting everything in readiness, and the show would be "a spick and span outfit," all the canvas being brand new, the wagons freshly painted and varnished. Rehearsals were to commence on April 27 under the direction of Equestrian Director Fred Ledgett, who had lined up a splendid program.

The Famous Nelson Family and the Nine Flying Wards, flying return act, were the big features. Harry Mooney, the noted elephant trainer who was in charge of the Barnum & Bailey herds for sixteen years, was superintendent of the menagerie and was a welcome addition to the roster. Charles Rooney, the veteran superintendent of baggage stock, had his big draft stock in fine condition for the season. William G. McIntosh had charge of the band, and his roster of musicians was complete. W.H. McFarland returned from a long sojourn in Florida and, as of yore, had the sideshow in fine shape.

The article concluded noting that advertising car No.

John Robinson large three semi-circle den cage, No. 45 in 1921. Note baby elephant Virginia housed in compartment at right. The baby arrived while the show was on the road. Bradbury collection.



1 had left to bill the opening stands, that Arthur R. Hopper was ahead of the show with the advance brigade, that J.H. Fitzpatrick would be the contracting press agent, and that Walter D. Nealand would be press agent back with the show. Pat Burke would be in charge of the front door, and Sam Dill would have charge of the red wagons.



John Robinson ticket wagon on Memphis lot in 1921. Marquee and menagerie tent are in back. Miller photo in Bradbury collection.

According to the Havirland files the 1921 John Robinson train consisted of 30 cars including 1 advance, 7 stocks, 14 flats and 8 coaches. All cars were painted orange. William Woodcock Sr. once told me that during the period 1919-22 the John Robinson sleepers were orange with silver letters. The paint scheme called for some lettering on the tops of the sleepers. The flats were the old style 60 foot wooden variety with truss rods underneath.

According to a note in the April 9, 1921 *Billboard* the show's baggage wagons were painted cream with red running gears.

We don't have a detailed count of the vehicles the show had in 1921 but it should be about the same as the late Isaac Marcks recorded for the John Robinson Circus in 1919, two years earlier, when the show was also on 30 cars. Marcks notes say there were 52 baggage wagons, 2 tractors, 1 auto, and 12 cages. The show's canvas was loaded on two spool wagons.

The Woodcock files indicate there were a total of nine elephants in the 1921 John Robinson herd under direction of Chris Zeitz. The roster included Major (male), Betty, Dutch, Blanche, Ruth, Margaret, Mama, Big Tillie, and Virginia. All were Asiatics and all females with exception of Major. Virginia was a baby which was purchased from Louis Ruhe through William P. Hall and was advertised as a newborn calf.

The late Bill Woodcock Sr. once wrote me that Little Virginia (which later grew into the famous Big Burma of the Mills Bros. herd) came to Hall in Lancaster, Missouri who shipped her to the John Robinson show. The punk was carried while on the show in the three semi circle den as it would be dangerous to put her in the herd of big elephants. Woodcock recalled that Major once broke down a partition and killed 7 of the 8 camels on the show.

In 1921 the show was owned by its operating company, The John Robinson Shows Co. of which Jerry Mugivan was president. According to the show's official route book for the season the executive and business staff consisted of: Jerry Mugivan, president and manager; Sam B. Dill, assistant manager; Frank F. Meyers, treasurer and auditor; Felix J. Meyers, assistant; Horace S. Stevens, attorney; Henry Mungovin, officer; Joseph Litchell, superintendent; J.F. Burke, superintendent front door with assistants D.E. McIntyre, John Mann, and Albert Stern; S. L. Cronin, advertising solicitor; Vic Degurra, war tax; Harry Fitzgerald, press representative; E.R. Williams timekeeper; Fred Ledgett, equestrian director; James MacCammon, mail agent; Thomas Murray and J.F. Corey were twenty-four hour agents.

Robinson hippo den in 1921 was a large cage wagon purchased from Ringling-Barnum surplus. Note Egyptian type carvings on corners. Date unknown but is definitely John Robinson in 1921-1922 period. Pfening Archives.



In the advance department there were George C. Moyer, general agent and traffic manager; C. W. Finney, contracting agent; J.H. Fitzpatrick, general press representative; A. R. Hopper, manager, advertising car No. 1; William Blackell, brigade agent; Fred Barker, special agent. On the advance also were 14 billposters, two bannermen, 5 lithographers, a biller, mail agent, and chef. William G. McIntosh was band director and had 20 musicians with him. Harry Bert was listed as superintendent of tickets (a change from that earlier reported), James Day was head usher, and Frank Gavin was manager of concessions. George Tipton was listed as steward of the cookhouse with a staff of 11 plus numerous waiters. Harry Miller was manager of dining cars on the train and Doc Edward Springer was head porter.

Major department superintendents included Charles Rooney, baggage stock; G. H. Williamson, properties; Thomas McKenna, trainmaster; Charles Donnolly, ring stock,; J.C. Smith, animals; Charles Prentiss, master mechanic; J.D. Stevens and wife, wardrobe; Thomas Dunn, lights; Charles Young, big top canvas.

Charles Hite was manager of candy stands and Jack Schechter of special privileges such as balloons, souvenirs, hamburger etc.

William H. MacFarland was manager of the sideshow and was assisted by Ray Dick. Attractions included Major Lessing, midget; Jess Adams, giant; Ollie Keely, punching bags; Marie Keely, lady boxer; John Davis, knife thrower; Joseph Dieckman, fire eater; Mignon Moore, novelty; Jolly Nellie Lane, fat girl; R.M. Trumble, lion act; Mrs. Jack Simpson, fortunes, and Mrs. C.C. Smith, Fay Mitchell, Marie Hands, and Mrs. Harry Fitzgerald, novelty. J.W. Toomey was director of the sideshow band of 14 pieces, including singers and dancers.

The daily grand free street parade was an important part of circus day when John Robin-



John Robinson Circus on the Radford, Virginia lot August 24, 1921. In right foreground are two baggage stock tents. In left foreground is the dining tent, and in rear, left to right are the padroom, big top, menagerie and midway. A. Robert Hall photo in Bradbury collection.

son came to town in 1921. Fortunately we have excellent photographic coverage of the march that season and we have relied heavily on the Ralph Miller set taken of the parade at Memphis, Tennessee. The Brantford, Ontario, Canada set also provides a good look at the 1921 Robinson parade. With the use of these photos we can pretty well reconstruct the parade lineup. At this point we want to thank Fred Dahlinger Jr., noted parade wagon authority, for the help he rendered by going over the author's notes, correcting errors, and providing much additional new information on some of the wagons appearing in the 1921 John Robinson street parade.

The well known Gladiator and Lion Tableau (currently at the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin on loan from Ringling-Barnum) was the No. 1 bandwagon. It was built by Sullivan and Eagle, Peru, Indiana for Mugivan and Bowers about 1912. The earliest known photograph pictures the wagon on Howes Great London Show in 1912. Dahlinger opines this wagon was possibly the largest and best tableau ever built by Sullivan and Eagle. After its delivery to Mugivan and Bowers it was used on one of their shows until it is pictured here in the 1921 John Robinson march. In 1915 it was on Robinson's Famous Shows and in 1916 was probably on John Robinson. From 1917-22 it was definitely on John Robinson, being numbered 30 in 1921.

The No. 2 bandwagon was a large box type tableau which had on its sides a painting with camels in a desert scene as the theme. On the skyboard was the show's title and painted scrolls. The wagon probably originated on Mugivan and Bowers shows c.1913-14. In 1917 and 1918 it was on John Robinson and had jungle paintings on the sides. The wagon appears in the W.H.B. Jones photo set while on Howes Great London about 1916. In 1919 and 1920 it also was used by John Robinson and in 1921 carried the number 34.

The sideshow bandwagon, No. 43, was another tableau with paintings on the sides. One side featured Roman Chariot Racing. Dahlinger suggests this painting might have been inspired by Alexander von Wagner's, "The Chariot Race." The other side had as the central theme a lion in a jungle setting with a Tarzan type engaging the beast in combat. The wagon probably originated on one of the Mugivan and Bowers shows about 1914-15. From 1917-20 it was probably on John Robinson and was for sure in 1921 and 1922 when it served as the sideshow bandwagon.

The clown bandwagon, No. 46, in 1921 was a tableau with the most interesting history of all in the parade that year. Wagon historians have named it "India" or "Jardinere" (French ornamental flower pot), the latter because of the central carving. The wagon was built about 1904 for Pawnee Bill's Wild West Show, possibly by Dentzel. It was on Pawnee Bill through 1908 then was sold to Ernest Haag on December 26, 1908 for $800.00, listed on the bill of sale as the "Oriental Bandwagon." From 1909-14 it was on the Mighty Haag Railroad Circus. Following the 1914 season Haag sold his rail show equipment and returned to overland operation. Some wagons were sold to the Wortham & Allen Carnival in February 1915. The India or Jardinere wagon was on Mugivan & Bowers' Robinson's Famous Shows in 1915 and could either have come there by a direct sale from Haag or from a resale by Wortham & Allen. It was then used on one of the Mugivan and Bowers shows through 1920, probably John Robinson. In 1921 and 1922 it was the clown bandwagon on that show.

The air calliope, No. 38, was one of the famous Gentry twins built by Sullivan & Eagle for Gentry Bros. Famous Shows about 1902. When used by Gentry both housed steam calliopes. One wagon later became surplus when they reduced the number of their shows. They offered for sale a steam calliope in the January 11, 1913 *Billboard*. At some time after this Mugivan & Bowers purchased it. The years and shows it was on after coming to Mugivan are somewhat obscure. In the December 21, 1918 *Billboard* the duo offered for sale a 20 whistle Nichol steam calliope which probably was the instrument in the Gentry wagon. Some time after this an air calliope was put into the wagon, possibly in 1920, but for sure in 1921.

The steam calliope (No. 48) was built by Bode of Cincinnati for Mugivan and Bowers about 1915. Dick Conover saw it in the Robinson's Famous Shows parade in 1915. In 1916 it was probably on the John Robinson Circus and was for sure in the period 1917-22. It carried the number 48 in 1921 but had been earlier No. 33 in 1917. Dahlinger suggests it may have been built prior to 1915 but there is no proof of this.

Another beautiful tableau type wagon on the John Robinson show in 1921 was the former Great Wallace Clown Ticket Wagon. It no longer served in

The No. 1 bandwagon, Gladiator and Lion, in a 1921 John Robinson parade. Pfening Archives.



the street parade as it did during earlier seasons while on Mugivan & Bowers units. Dahlinger covered the wagon in an article in the January-February 1983 *Bandwagon*. It was built by Sullivan and Eagle for the 1897 season of the Great Wallace Shows. It was called the "clown ticket wagon" because of the jester portraits incorporated in the front corner carvings. Dahlinger records in his article that after Wallace acquired the Carl Hagenbeck Wild Animal Show in early 1907 he had considerable excess property on hand which he made available for sale. Mugivan and Bowers bought this ticket wagon and a photo pictures it in parade on Howes Great London in 1908. It was on that show through 1912 and then served on one of their units from then on. It was probably on Robinson's Famous in 1914-15, John Robinson, 1916 and then on that show through 1921-22.



Clown bandwagon, India or Jardinere, in John Robinson parade in 1921. Pfening Archives.

Most of the John Robinson's cages in 1921, about a dozen, were fairly small and rather plain and with minimum decorations. However, several are quite significant. One rather interesting cage in 1921 was No. 45 which had three large semi circle den compartments and a high skyboard with a variety of carvings on it, including two pelicans which are currently located in the courthouse museum in Peru, Indiana. The origin of the wagon currently is unknown but Dahlinger suggests it was possibly built by Bode and calls attention to the outside sunbursts it originally had. These were later replaced by inside type, probably from St. Mary's. Bill Woodcock Sr. said this was Mugivan & Bowers first hippo den and it carried Congo in 1917. Later it began carrying other animals and it did so in 1921. One compartment was occupied by the baby elephant, Virginia, as pictured here. Dahlinger believes the wagon possibly proved inadequately strong to continue carrying the hippo, Congo. He also notes that the tank seems to be very small and that no reasonably sized hippo could have fit into it. In any event the show did acquire another cage to carry Congo.

The hippo den used by John Robinson in 1921 was a large wagon with Egyptian type corner statues and was purchased form Ringling-Barnum surplus at Bridgeport, Connecticut. This may indeed have been the only example of a direct wagon sale from Ringling to Mugivan and Bowers. The wagon was possibly built for Forepaugh-Sells about 1907. It is pictured in that show's menagerie in 1910. In early 1912 it went to Bridgeport and was used by Barnum & Bailey through 1918. With the combined shows in 1919 it would have become surplus and made available for sale to Mugivan and Bowers. Possibly it may have been on John Robinson a year earlier but was positively on the show in use as the hippo den in 1921 and 1922.

An unusual cage carried in 1921 was a small octagon shaped den that housed monkeys. It is not certain the first time John Robinson had this cage. Woodcock says it was not there in 1917-18. In 1921 it was pulled in parade by a four camel team.

There was a sense of uncertainty among circus owners as the 1921 season approached. The past two seasons had been good, as 1919 was one of the best circus years ever, and 1920 also gave a hefty take. The post World War I economic boom leveled off by the end of 1920 which was a presidential election year which old troupers always declared were not good for show business. This time there had been somewhat of an exception but still there had been considerably less profit made than the previous season.

Politically, there had been a distinct change in the country. The "Great Idealist" Woodrow Wilson went out of office in March 1921 and the new president, Republican Warren G. Harding, was sworn in. Wilson left as a man broken in health and spirit. Wilson, who had proclaimed the United States entry into World War I was to "Make the World Safe for Democracy" was not without his detractors who changed that wording to "Make the World Safe for the Democratic Party." Wilson who also had sponsored and signed the Treaty of Versailles for the U. S. in 1919 and laid the groundwork for the new League of Nations saw both fail to be ratified by the Senate. Shortly after Harding came in both houses of Congress passed a resolution declaring the war with Germany, Austria, and Hungary ended and treaties were signed with those nations.

So as the 1921 circus season began there was a new regime in Washington and a new political climate had engulfed the nation. The 18th Ammendment, Prohibition, had become law the previous year, and even though Wilson had vetoed the Volstead Act (Prohibition Enforcement Law) Congress had overridden it so it was the law of the land. Returning veterans continued to cuss the homefolks for letting this ammendment pass while they were away in France but it wasn't long before Capone and his like soon took care of their thirst. And so the "Roaring 20's" was now at hand as was the 1921 circus season.

Flat car type railroad circuses going out were Ringling-Barnum, 95 cars; Sells-Floto, 30 cars; John Robinson, 30 cars; Hagenbeck-Wallace, 30 cars; Howes Great London Circus and Van Amburg's Trained Wild Animals, 25 cars; Al G. Barnes, 30 cars; Gentry Bros., 15 cars; Rhoda Royal, 15 cars; Walter L. Main, 15 cars; Sparks, 15 cars; Campbell-Bailey-Hutchinson, 10 cars; and Palmer Bros., 10 cars. All of these circuses with exception of Ringling-Barnum presented a daily street parade. Ringling-Barnum ceased parading following the 1920 season and thus set a precedent which several other of the larger rail shows would follow a few years down the road.

In addition to the flat car shows there were several tunnel car or gilly type rail circuses. These included Christy Bros, 3 cars, and these 2 car shows: Great Sanger (King brothers), Campbell Bros., Cole Bros., Wheeler Bros., and W. E. Morgan.

There were about a dozen of the larger overland shows which included La Mont Bros., Honest Bill, Atterbury Bros., Lindeman Bros., Lincoln Bros., M. L. Clark and Sons, Rippel Bros., Lowery Bros., Great Keystone, Mighty Haag, Richards Bros., B. L. Wallace, and James B. O'Neil. Some shows were now fully motorized such as B. L. Wallace while others such as Lincoln Bros. used horses entirely, but many of the mud

shows now moved with a combination of horse power and a few motor trucks. Some of these were Mighty Haag and Honest Bill. Several of the larger overland shows also presented a daily street parade as well as did some of the tunnel car shows.

Some six days before John Robinson began its season's tour an event occurred on April 24, 1921 which at the time went unreported in the circus publications but on that day the registrar of Vital Statistics for the State of Texas wrote in his records that on that day in Smith County in the city of Tyler there was born a male child to John Thomas and Nancy LaBoon Bradbury. They named him Joseph for the Patron Saint of the Church, both grandfathers, and scores of other minor relatives. The youngster would not become father of his country, lead his people to the promised land, or become the first man in space, but some 67 years later he was destined to record the history of the John Robinson Circus for the season of his birth.

John Robinson opened as scheduled in Peru, Indiana on April 30, 1921. Hagenbeck-Wallace opened the same day in Louisville. The May 7, 1921 *Billboard* covered the events with separate stories but a single headline, "ALL MUIGIVAN AND BOWERS SHOWS NOW IN OPERATION. Hagenbeck-Wallace and John Robinson Circuses Open Simultaneously, Former at Louisville and Latter at Peru-Both Programs Well Balanced--Parades Big Features."

The text of the John Robinson story was as follows: "Peru, Ind., May 1--With weather conditions ideal, the sun shining brightly and the air cool and invigorating, the John Robinson Circus began its 1921 tour here yesterday with two performances to large and enthusiastic audiences. Everything was favorable for the opening day and the home-town crowds were much in evidence.

"The John Robinson Circus this season is truly bigger, grander and better than ever before, and the inauguration of its 98th consecutive season augurs well for a prosperous tour.

"As in the usual custom, the last rehearsal was held Friday night, when the mammouth tent was crowded to its utmost capacity by the town folks who were admitted free by the management. Many returned to witness the opening performance Saturday afternoon and applause was frequent and prolonged as the various acts performed their tricks.

"The huge new waterproof tents were erected on the South Peru show grounds, and the new main tent, a huge canvas structure - a 150 round top, with three 50 foot middle pieces, presented a beautiful spectacle, with flags flying, every pole and stake freshly painted, and billowy, snowy canvas floating in the breeze. The tent outfit this season is all brand new and represents a heavy outlay of cash. Shortly after 10 o'clock the parade left the show grounds and traversed the main streets of Peru. The line of march was typically homelike, throngs of people crowding every street and lane, applauding their show neighbors, who acknowledged the greetings. As for the parade itself, it was agreed by showmen present, it completely eclipsed all other John Robinson street pageants, and every band and tableau wagon, each cage and den, all newly painted and decorated with gold and silver leaf and resplendent in vivid colors. The costumes were rich and costly, every attache neat and the entire spectacle one that reflects credit to the management.

"And then came the big show and what a wonderful show it was. The roster of the main performance contained the names of some of the most famous arenic artists in circusdom and the whole program, from beginning to end, was typically wonderful. The Nelson Family is again the big feature with its splendid Risley act, and the marvelous feats drew hearty applause. The Nine Wards, in their daring flying return trapeze act, thrilled the spectators with their astonishing feats in midair, flying thru space with apparent ease. Joe Hodgini and Cecil Lowande, principal male bareback riders, won favor with their riding acts. Etta Hodgini, Blanche Reed, Irene Montgomery and Nettie Dill were superb in their riding. A large number of clowns, in laugh-provoking antics, tickled the vast audience. The two big herds of performing elephants were presented by Harry Mooney and Irene Montgomery. Anna Peterson, in a slide for life thrilled; Tetu Robinson, in her wire act, won favor, and a host of others amused and thrilled the audiences. The performance ran as smooth as clock work on the opening performance under the able direction of Equestrian Director Fred Ledgett, who has lined up an exceptionally good program of acts. Bandmaster William McIntosh has a splendid band of 25 capable musicians, who rendered an artistic program of inspiring martial tunes and gave a concert prior to the big show performance.



W. G. McIntosh band director with his twenty musicians on John Robinson Circus in 1921. Pfening Archives.

"Manager Jerry Mugivan is to be congratulated on the John Robinson Circus this season, it being one of the greatest lineups he has ever given the public and he was the recipient of many congratulations on the opening day.

"The draft horses came in for a share of praise, being all dapple gray, and well matched pairs, and add to the general ensemble. The train has been completely overhauled, and is painted a deep orange, with brown trimmings, with white lettering, and presents a pretty appearance.

"Summing it all up the John Robinson Circus this season is a most pretentious one, and indications point to a pleasant and prosperous season. General Agent George C. Moyer came down from Chicago to look the outfit over, and expressed himself as highly pleased at the splendid showing. Charles C. Cory was another visitor on opening day.

"Many new animals have been added to the menagerie this season, and it now embraces new and costly specimens of wild animals.

"The sideshow also presents a great line-up, with twenty new double-deck banners, and a high-class program of acts. W. H. McFarland is in charge as usual, and was kept busy receiving congratulations the opening day.

"George Tipton, the steward, has a brand new dining tent, with all new equipment, of which he is very proud, and the staff of waiters and attaches was clad in spotless white uniforms.

"The wardrobe this season is especially fine, all new parade and tournament costumes having been made during the time that the show was in winter quarters.

"The show left Peru at midnight Saturday and arrived in Springfield, Ohio, at 4 o'clock on Sunday afternoon, where two performances will be given on Monday, starting the road tour at that city. Many citizens of Peru gath-

ered at the 'runs' to say goodby to the departing show folks."

The show's route book mentions several acts not covered in the *Billboard* review. Possibly these were added later to the program or could merely have been omitted by the writer. These were the Tamakin Troupe, six Japanese; Strassle Seal Act, plus several other performers listed by name only. No doubt some of these did iron jaw, ladders or other aerial acts, and menage riding. Wild West aftershow performers were Billy Leon, Rex Smith, Texas Joe Clark, Marie Clark, Montana Joe, Tom Ellis, and Marie Stevenson.

Following the opener, the first week of the season saw the show playing two stands in Ohio, Springfield and Newark, then it moved eastward quickly into Pennsylvania for Washington, Allegheny, Greensburg, and Johnstown.

The *Billboard* said that four circuses would play in Ohio in May, these being, in addition to John Robinson, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Ringling-Barnum, and Rhoda Royal. The report noted that while many Ohio towns had been hard hit by the industrial depression most of them had partly recovered by the middle of the month. Special agents had been in most every nook and corner of the Buckeye State ascertaining if conditions were right for their attractions. The *Billboard* story concluded by pointing out that some of these show's routes deviated greatly from the previous seasons. The Robinson show always had made Canton, Ohio and other nearby towns early in May, and the Ringling-Barnum show did not make this territory until mid-July.

The May 14, 1921 *Billboard* contained splendid coverage of the show's first week. The headline stated simply, "John Robinson Circus, Initial Weeks' Business Good and Many Visitors on Hand." The story said that the first week of the John Robinson Circus had been an eventful one, despite cold and rainy weather business was exceptionally big and the show made a wonderful impression on the towns visited. The famous Nelson family repeated triumphs of former years and the Nine Flying Wards, in their sensational flying return act, thrilled the crowds. The Tamakin Troupe of Japanese, the Ten Tangorienes, a big Arabian act, Cecil Lowande, Joe Hodgini, Blanche Reed,



Cage No. 45 with three semi-circle den compartments in Robinson Memphis parade in 1921. Miller photo in Bradbury collection.

Etta Hodgini, Irene Montgomery and a host of others were seen to advantage.

The article then told of individual stands: "Springfield, Ohio, May 2-After a long run the circus train arrived here at 3 o'clock Sunday and was on the lot at 5. Billy Exton, former press agent, was in town with his feature film at the Fairbanks Theater. Billy has a host of friends with the circus. Monday was cold and raw, but business was excellent at both performances.

"Newark, Ohio, May 3-It was raining hard when the train pulled into the yards but a big crowd was on hand. No parade, and the lot was impossible with mud. Plenty of straw made the big tent dry and comfortable and large crowds came. D. C. Hawn of the Rhoda Royal Shows, was a visitor on the lot and spent the afternoon. Sam J. Banks, legal adjuster for the Royal Shows, was on hand early and spent the day with his many friends. Doc Waddell, for many years press agent for the John Robinson Circus motored down from Columbus with a party of friends to witness the matinee performance. T. W. Ballenger, general agent for the Sparks Circus, and Tom Weideman, of the L. J. Heath Shows were also visitors during the early part of the week.

Chandelier wagon in the back yard of the 1921 Robinson show. Pfening Archives.



"Washington, Pa., May 4-After many delays at transfer points, the train arrived at noon. The lot was absolutely impassable with mud and the first wagon went to the hubs. After considering the matter carefully the management decided to cancel the town.

"Pittsburgh, Pa., May 5-The show lot was in the Alegheny section and the day was cold and dismal but heavy business was the rule at both matinee and night performances. Walter L. Main was a welcome visitor and spent the day on the lot. Mr. Main has been visiting on the Walter L. Main Circus for a week and is looking fine. [The Main show that season was operated by Andrew Downie.] C. B. Fredericks, of the Sparks Circus, was also a visitor, and at night Frank Stearns, car manager for Sparks, and Raymond Dean, press agent of the same show, dropped in for an hour.

"Greensburg, Pa, May 6-With perfect weather conditions and the sun shining brightly this was another big day. The sideshow had a big day and the Wild West concert was liberally patronized.

"Johnstown, Pa., May 7-Early arrival and a mile haul to the lot. Weather fine. Long parade and many favorable comments. Big houses at both matinee and night shows."

A week after John Robinson had played the Pittsburgh area, another Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard show, Sells-Floto, was in town. Two days were spent with the parade moving through the downtown area the first day and the second in East Liberty section. Tremendous business was enjoyed, especially on the initial day. The *Billboard* commented that Sells-Floto enjoyed the the distinction of being the first circus to play Pittsburgh in many years when the weather was ideal. This no doubt helped boost the heavy take but it was pointed out that John Robinson a few days earlier on the north part of town packed their big top at both performances despite a cold, drizzling rain. It was concluded that the populace in the great steel city was just circus hungry.

After a long Sunday run of 338 miles over the B & O and Pennsylvania railroads John Robinson moved to Washington, D. C. where performances on Monday, May 9 and Tuesday, May 10 began the second week. Two days in Baltimore, Maryland followed, and single dates in

York and Norristown, Pennsylvania completed the week.

To start the third week the show moved over into New Jersey for a single stand at Camden, May 16, then returned to the Keystone State for Reading, Harrisburg, Altoona, Clearfield, and Du-Bois.



The No. 2 bandwagon with a skyboard and painting of camels in desert scene in Robinson Memphis parade 1921. Miller photo in Bradbury collection.

The May 28, 1921 *Billboard* again had wonderful coverage of recent John Robinson activities. The article was titled "TWO-DAY STANDS FOR JOHN ROBINSON SHOW. In Washington and Baltimore Very Good - Favorable Impression Made in Those Cities."

The story said that during the past two weeks the John Robinson Circus had played two day engagements at Washington, D. C. and Baltimore and made a favorable impression in those cities by the splendid performance and equipment. The press and public in both cities were enthusiastic in their praise for the show. The weather at Washington was all that could be desired. The show lot was located at 15th and J streets, N. E. and capacity audiences were in attendance at all four performances. The parade was excellent, the wagons being bright and new, and this being the first time in 18 years that the John Robinson Circus visited the Capital City the press bestowed a lot of favorite comment upon the aggregation. During the parade on Monday the elephants stopped in front of the executive mansion and saluted the President. Vice President Coolidge was an interested visitor at the Tuesday matinee.

The story continued noting that Baltimore was the next stand, May 11 and 12. The first day was cold and rainy, but two excellent audiences were present and the big show performance won high favor, as did the parade which made a tour of the principal streets of the city. On Thursday, however, a downpour of rain that caused ankle deep mud hurt the attendance, but the matinee was largely attended.

"York, Pa., May 13- Weather cloudy and a light rain fell during the parade but cleared at noon and a capacity matinee was the result. The night house was also big. Lot was close to town, but a heavy rainstorm at night hurt the attendance somewhat.

"Norristown, Pa., May 14-Weather warm and clear. Lot was two miles from town and a long haul, but parade left the grounds at noon and was back at 2 o'clock and matinee started to a packed house. The night attendance also taxed the capacity of the big top.

"Sunday, May 15, at Camden, N. J. Show arrived early and set up by noon. Monday was warm and clear and attendance was large at the matinee. At night the first turn away of the season was recorded. Camden was one of the banner days of the season so far and the sideshow also had a great day."

The fourth week began with the show still in Pennsylvania at New Castle, May 23, but the next day it returned to Ohio for one day stands at Youngstown, Canton, and Akron, and two days in Cleveland, May 27-28 to conclude it.

The June 4, 1921 *Billboard* told of the visit to Cleveland plus gave information on other recent John Robinson stands. The article said the show came, saw and conquered Cleveland with two capacity houses on opening day while on Saturday a turnaway was registered. It was the first circus to visit Cleveland so far in the season. The show grounds were conveniently located on the lake front, within ten minutes walk from the heart of the city. The show arrived early in the morning on two special trains and thousands thronged the streets to witness the street parade, which won much favorable comment. [Author's note. It is believed that ordinarily the show moved as a single section but this report may be entirely true and that for this particular move it was done in two sections. This happened at times.] The immaculate tents and modern equipment came in for effusive praise from the Cleveland dailies, the *Plain Dealer* being especially enthusiastic in its approval of the show. The big show program was now running smoothly and included such well-known circus celebrities as the Famous Nelson Family, Nine Flying Wards, Aerial Youngs, Tetu Robinson, the Royal Tamakin Japanese Troupe, Eight Tangerian Arabian Troupe, Chin Toy Chinese Troupe, Brewer and Smith, Joe Hodgini, Cecil Lowande, Etta Hodgini, Nettie Dill and a host of others.

The Joe Hodgini Troupe in back yard of the Robinson show in 1921. Hodgini is standing on horse in front of the Gladiator and Lion tableau. Pfening Archives.



The story continued advising that business was splendid at New Castle, two capacity houses being registered, and at Canton and Youngstown, in spite of the business depression, the huge tents were crowded. The weather was perfect, but at Youngstown a heavy downpour occurred at night after the show had loaded. Akron was a big surprise. The matinee was light, but at night, the crowds came and filled every seat in the tent.

"The Oriental Rags" was now back home and joined the sideshow annex Minstrel Show. "Rags" was a great entertainer and his topical songs were a big hit on the sideshow program.

The piece concluded by stating that Clearfield and Du Bois, Pennsylvania were very good for the Robinson show.

After Cleveland a Sunday run took the show into New York where the fifth week of the season began at Buffalo, Monday, May 30. Additional stands came at Newark, Utica, Gloversville, Watertown and Ogdensburg. Then it was into Canada where the sixth week found John Robinson in Quebec at Montreal for two days, June 6-7, which was followed by a move into Ontario and one day stands for the remainder of the week at Ottawa, Cornwall, Brockville, and Kingston. The seventh week saw dates in Ontario with the show playing Belleville, Oshawa, Cobourg, Peterboro, Midland, and Orillia.

The June 18, 1921 *Billboard* advised that John Robinson played to capacity business and established a new record for attendance at

Montreal. On both days of the engagement turnaway houses were recorded. The lot was centrally located in the main portion of the city and long before the time set for the opening matinee the lot was literally packed to suffocation with an eager, expectant crowd anxious to see the first circus of the season. The street parade made a big hit. Montreal was the banner stand of the season and demonstrated that the John Robinson Circus was a big drawing card in Canada. Capacity houses were also the rule at Watertown and Ogdensburg, New York. The show moved across the St. Lawrence River from Ogdensburg to Prescott by ferry and arrived in Montreal at 2 p. m. on Sunday.

The *Billboard* report also said that Ottawa on June 8, likewise gave the circus two big crowds. A short haul and long parade was given.

Cornwall, Ontario June 9, had a big matinee. The cars were right alongside of the lot and the parade was a short one, which pleased the townspeople.

Other notes said that Elizabeth Rooney was a newcomer on the big show program and is working her act in No. 1 ring.

A final item stated that W. H. McFarland, in charge of the sideshow, had an excellent lineup of attractions including Jesse Adams, the boy giant; Col. S. G. Brinkley, long bearded man; the Keeleys, bag punchers; Marguerite, lady sword swallower; Joe Lessing, midget; Ed Hazzard, tattooed man; Dyckman, the fire fiend; Capt. Ralph Mayfield with Saltun, the untamable lion, and other attractions. Arthur Ryan was inside lecturer and made second openings.

Another report in the trade publications said that John Robinson arrived in Ottawa June 8, in the morning. The parade, which was rumored would be omitted, and which naturally caused much depression among the young element, proved all that was expected of it, being staged near the noon hour. It made a very good appearance. A notable feature of the John Robinson show this year was the number of girls in the various displays. The aerial ballet in particular was spectacular. Good weather lent to the local success financially and a large attendance enjoyed itself to the full.

The June 25, 1921 *Billboard* continued the coverage of the shows tour of Canada. Big houses were the rule all through Canada, and the street parade attracted thousands from out of town in every city visited. At Kingston, Ontario, June 11, a heavy downpour occurred just prior to the matinee, but this did not prevent the tent from being taxed to its utmost capacity. At Kingston the management gave free admission to 275 wounded soldiers at the matinee performance. The *Evening Standard* was especially enthusiastic regarding the generosity of the management in entertaining the wounded heroes and devoted columns of praise to the show.

Belleville, Ontario, was visited on June 13, and was one of the best stands of the season. The show spent Sunday there, and on Monday the streets were packed with spectators to see the parade. Over 1,000 were seated on the straw.



Air calliope (Gentry Twin) ready for parade on John Robinson Circus lot during the 1921. Pfening Archives.

All of the 8th and 9th weeks were spent on an extended tour of Ontario as John Robinson played a total of 22 days in that province. The 8th week saw the show at Toronto for two days and one dayers at Guelph, Owen Sound, Stratford, and Goderich. During the 9th week the show played Hamilton, St. Catherines, Kitchener, Brantford, St. Thomas, and Chatham, which was the final stand in Canada in 1921.

The July 2, 1921 *Billboard*, in addition to carrying two separate advertisements by John Robinson, one wanting sideshow people, the other seeking billposters and bannermen, there was another informative article concerning the Canadian tour. The piece said that Toronto welcomed the John Robinson Circus--the first of the season--with open arms, June 20, by packing the huge main tent. Four capacity audiences greeted the show, June 20-21, and every act on the program was liberally applauded. The newspapers were highly enthusiastic regarding the show.

At the Monday matinee performance the management gave free admission to 400 wounded soldiers from the Davensmith and Christie Street hospitals. The boys were brought in automobiles to the circus lot. At the conclusion of the big show the management invited them to remain for the concert, after which they were photographed in a body and moving pictures taken of the group.

Over 1,000 orphans from the Catholic and Protestant orphanages throughout the city were likewise entertained at the Tuesday matinee. The little tots, many of whom had never seen a circus, were brought in autos. Each child was given a flag, peanuts and candy. Entertaining the orphans and soldiers was a regular custom of the John Robinson management.

The article continued saying the Canadian tour has been highly successful. Following Toronto the show played at Guelph on June 23, and despite the business depression the attendance was splendid, especially at night. Owen Sound was played June 24, the lot being located a short distance from town, and the public show hungry. The matinee was a turnaway.

"Miss Congo," the hippopotamus, was a big attraction in these Canadian towns. One of the features of the parade was that every den and cage was wide open and could be seen free of charge. The newspapers frequently commented upon this fact. The Toronto *Morning Gazette*, in its review, stated; "No finer horses have been seen in the Dominion than the hundreds of handsome dapple gray animals carried by this circus. It is a horse show in itself, and many of the animals are capable of winning prizes at the Toronto Exhibition should the management feel inclined to enter them. Everything about the circus seems rich and new, clean as a whistle, strictly up to date and still adhering to the time-honored traditions laid down by John Robinson, and at all times a real old-fashioned circus."

As the 10th week of the season began the show crossed over the Detroit River into the United States with the first stand coming at Detroit on Monday, July 4. Two Michigan dates followed, Ann Arbor and Kalamazoo, then the show dipped down into Indiana for Goshen and Wabash, and on the 9th, final stand of the week, was in Illinois at Dixon.

The 11th week contained all Illinois stands with the show playing Springfield, Jacksonville, Macomb, Canton, Princeton, and two days in White City, Chicago, the second being a rare Sunday stand, July 17.

ONLY BIG SHOW COMING

Chapter 3 Part One
The 1879 and 1880 Seasons

By Orin C. King

A GORGEOUS, GLITTERING
GALAXY
of GOLDEN GLORY

1 8 7 9

There were two shows circulating through eastern Kansas early in the season of 1879, two shows that illustrated the extremes of circusdom--a large, growing show like W. W. Cole's Great New York and New Orleans Circus, Museum, Menagerie, and Congress of Living Wonders, riding splendidly upon the rails; and a little homemade mud show with a highly embroidered title, Barry & Co's Great Western Equescurriculum, Hippotheatron and Congress of Stars. In one respect the two shows were equal: Adults, 50 cents; Children, 25.

Not much is known of Barry's show or of Barry himself. J. M. Berry operated wagon shows out of Topeka beginning in 1887 and from Carbondale after 1891, but it is not known if he were the proprietor of the Hippotheatron. Barry & Co's Great Western was, however, a Kansas show. An advertisement in the *South Kansas Tribune,* Independence, May 7, stated, "This show has wintered, refitted and recruited in our midst, and are starting out for the season of 1879 in capital shape.

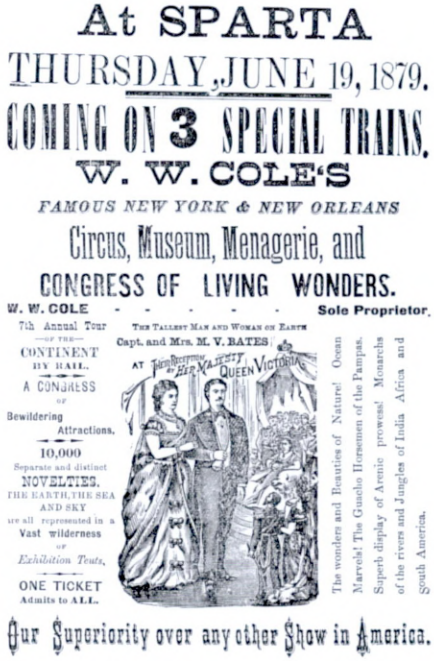
"NEW WAGONS AND CARRIAGES, NEW BAND, TICKET AND ADVANCE WAGONS, NEW TENT TRAPPINGS, &c., &c.

"Also have spared no pains in procuring some of the best Artists in the Profession. The GREAT WESTERN SHOW of BARRY & CO. will be one of the very best on the road. They have not picked up a few cages of old animals and second class actors, and advertised a large Circus and Caravan, but have put their time, talent and money into a concern that cannot fail to please the people."

Barry's Great Western opened its season on May 10 in Independence. The *Tribune* reported on May 14 that "The Barry & Co Circus gave their first performance in this city last Saturday. The attendance was quite large in the evening and the performance was fair. Three of their actors had failed to arrive." Barry played Parsons on May 12.

For Chetopa on May 14, the show advertised "Prof. Wallace's Grand Balloon Ascension in his Air Ship to the clouds." The show played Thayer on May 22, and Humboldt on May 27.

In addition to Prof. Wallace "hanging by the toes to a single bar, one mile high," the Great Western in Humboldt announced, "Also to be seen on the ground, free to all, is Little Francis (sic), in her ascension on a single wire from the ground to the top of the center pole."



W. W. Cole again featured Capt. and Mrs. Bates in his 1879 newspaper ads. Pfening Archives.

The Humboldt *Union* of May 31, spoke kindly of the show. "The Equescurriculum has come and gone. They were an honest set of fellows, paid their bills, and gave as good a show as they could under the circumstances."

W. W. Cole in an advertisement in the Emporia *News*, announcing exhibitions on May 3, of his Great New York and New Orleans Circus, Museum, Menagerie and Congress of Living Wonders, admitted that although his show in 1879 was only "10 TIMES LARGER!" it was "100 TIMES MORE GRAND!" For his "Seventh Tour of the Continent by Railroad" Cole claimed that his show was "Coming on Three Special Trains."

W. W. Cole proclaimed his greatest pleasure and extolled the quality of his show in the following paragraph featured prominently in his newspaper advertising: "The proprietor of this vast and unparalled consolidation of interesting and attractive features has, for the season of 1879, through a life-long experience and a lavish outlay of money, the pleasure of placing before the public the GRANDEST EFFORT OF HIS LIFE, by procuring all the attainable novelties of the BRUTE CREATION from all quarters of the world, and in connection therewith will be found the most conspicious Riders, Gymnasts, Grostesque and Acrobatic Male and Female Artists to be found in any part of the world. This grand and classic entertainment is wholly exempt from the inelegancies and coarseness too frequently permitted in most tent exhibitions. In this Great Show there is nothing ever presented that a gentleman would hesitate to bring his family to witness, or the most exacting take exception to. "The featured attraction of the show was once again "The Tallest Man and Woman on Earth," Captain and Mrs. M. V. Bates. Cole had apparantly forgotten the season of 1878 when "The Two Giants" were heavily advertised, for he announced that, "now, for the first time upon exhibition here, and at no extra charge (they) will be exhibited in my main tent." Cole claimed to pay the couple $20,000 for the season.

The menagerie was touted as containing "35 Cages, Dens and Corralls of Rare and Curious Animals!"

. "Baby Elephants, Baby Lions, Baby Tigers, Baby Monkeys, a Sea Elephant (captured in the South Sea), the Walrus, Den of Monster Serpents (some of which are 50 feet long), Herd of Elephants, Trained and Performing Wild Beasts (a specialty in this Great Show), Drove of Bactrian Camels."

The public was invited to witness the "Grand Free Hippodromatic Street

Pageant. The MOST GORGEOUS STREET PAGEANT EVER SEEN."

"$100,000 worth of Golden Tableau Cars and Chariots, like mountains of burnished gold in sunlight.

No expense was too great for W. W. Cole when he desired to please the public. Any profit derived was pure serendipity.

The Emporia *News* reported a late arrival due to a slow order because of the circus cars being a trifle wide for the Katy tracks. The parade appeared at one o'clock. The *News* reported that, "The performance was thrilling in the extreme, especially the daring exhibition upon trapeze by two lady members of the troupe, whose wonderful and daring feats were only surpassed by their exhibition of nerve and self control.

"Take it all in all the performance was a success. It was a great moral show!"

On Monday, May 5, Cole exhibited at El Dorado.

* * * * * *

James A. Bailey and his partner James A. Cooper brought to Topeka on July 26, a show that ranks among the all-time greats--Cooper, Bailey & Co's Great London Circus, Sanger's British Menagerie and the Famous International Allied Shows, "Con-solidated for the season of 1879, and together forming what is beyond the shadow of a doubt the Greatest and Most Magnificent Enterprise on the Face of the Earth. Ten Mighty Shows Consolidated. All for One Price of Admission."

The previous December Bailey and Cooper had brought their International Allied Shows back to the United States after a fabulous three-year tour of the Orient, Australia, Dutch East Indies, the Pacific coast of South America, and through the Straits of Magellan to the larger cities of the eastern coast. Cooper and Bailey came home with overflowing coffers and purchased Howes' Great London Circus combined with Sanger's British Menagerie.

Coup and Castello opened the door for the modern circus when they put the Barnum show on rails in 1872, but James A. Bailey and his partner Cooper brought it to fruition, when, in the Great London show, they heaped feature on feature, when they brought the top stars together under one tent, when they displayed more and better animals, when they gave to America a surfeit of what the public expected a circus to be. More parade, more music, more awe and wonder, more splendor and elegance, more of everything, more than a person could see or absorb. Today rock concerts capture their audiences by decibels, flash and emotion, flooding the audience with an overwhelming mass of sensation beyond comprehension. Bailey did it first.



An 1879 herald of the W. W. Cole Great New York and New Orleans Circus which appeared in Kansas that year. Cole was a risk taker, often playing frontier territory. Over the winter of 1880-1881 he took his circus to the Far East and Australia. Pfening Archives.

For the exhibition in Topeka, July 26, the show advertised extensively in all of Topeka's newspapers beginning with the *Blade* on July 10 and continued for 15 days, missing only Sundays when the *Blade* did not publish. The *Commonwealth* ran seven ads; the *Colored Citizen,* three; the *Kansas Farmer,* two; the *Capital*, eight. Top billing, just below the names of Cooper and Bailey, went to the show's ten elephants.

Chieftan	10' 10"	7,960 lbs
Mandarin	10' 4"	7,825
Princess	10' 2 1/2"	7,440
Mamma	10' 2 1/2"	7,435
Victoria	9' 10"	6,985
Titania	9' 3 1/2"	6,330
Khedive	9' 7 1/2"	6,445
Juliet	4' 4"	1,170
Romeo	4' 6"	1,224

Prince, the clown, 46", 300

The ads presented the elephants building pyramids, balancing their bulk hazardously, pulling wagons and racing around the hippodrome. The viewer was assured that the elephants would perform exactly as represented in the illustration. The combined weight of the elephants was reported as 53,117 pounds and the aggregate height of ten elephants--a sure winner in the field of useless statistics--was given as 83' 2". The elephants performed in one ring as directed by George Arstingstall.

Horsemanship was the backbone of the performance. The Great London boasted the premier assemblage of equestrians--Charles W. Fish, Senorita Adelaide Codona, Frank Melville, William Dutton, Senor Don Geronimo Belle and a host of lesser names.

Other named performers included the Brothers Leotard, Awata Katsnoshin, the Lawrence Sisters and Wm. H. Batchelor, "the Acknowledged Champion Leaper." Clowns were Nat Austin, John Lowlow, Johnny Patterson and Wm. Bliss.

When the show's second advertising car came to Topeka on July 19, they brought the city a special excitement. The Great London show of 1879 was illuminated by electric lights and a preview of this wonder was exhibited outside the Tefft House at Seventh street and Kansas avenue.

On the 23d, Bailey presented Topeka with a free entertainment. The following story appeared in the *Blade*:

"Grand Free Exhibition

Tonight at 8 p.m., From the Balcony of the Tefft House.

"The Great London Circus, illustrated by over 200 beautiful pictures, brilliantly illuminated by calcium lights. The vast pavilions, menagerie, acrobat riders, gymnasts, the grand street pro-

cession and everything of interest pertaining to the Great Show placed before your eyes in a realistic manner. Amusing and interesting to both old and young. Something worth seeing. Don't miss it. Remember to-night. Free to all."



This 1879 Cooper & Bailey newspaper ad named the performing elephants. Circus World Museum collection.

The screen was a large canvas stretched across the front of the Tefft House.

On July 26, the Great London, coming from Lawrence, arrived in North Topeka "at an early hour" on the Kansas Pacific. Unloading began at once and the wagons were moved rapidly to the lot on Monroe street between Ninth and Eleventh streets.

According to the *Blade* on show day, "By half past eight o'clock the people began coming in, and by ten o'clock Kansas avenue was a seething, swaying mass of humanity for blocks. The densest portion of the crowd was between the Court House on the corner of Fourth street, and Eighth street and it was almost impossible at one time for a pedestrian to make his or her way along the pavements.

"The trains from the west on both roads brought in large crowds at noon to swell the throng already here. Competent judges estimate the number of people who witnessed the street cavalcade at not less than 20,000."

The *Capital* estimated the crowd at only half that number. The population of Topeka a year later was 15,452.

"The parade," the *Blade* continued, "was a grand affair and was entirely satisfactory to all who witnessed it. The day was reasonably cool and the show was highly appreciated."

The empty trains of the Great London, standing near the Kansas Pacific depot, attracted large crowds.

Cooper and Bailey and their wives, and John Hood, treasurer of the show, made their headquarters at the Tefft House. Frank Melville, the bareback rider, also checked into the Tefft.

While the top executives were taking their ease between shows, the ten elephants were having a special treat. Shunganunga Creek ran close to the show grounds and the animals were taken for a swim about six o'clock.

"At first they were very cautious," according to the *Capital*, "and made few ventures, but as they became familiar with the place their boldness increased and soon they were cutting up like so many little boys. The water was not deep enough to allow them to dive and they had to content themselves with other sports which was done by rolling first on one side and then the other, sticking their heads under water, ducking each other and beating the waters as they never were before. The three small ones found places where they could cover themselves entirely, save a small part of the back. This sport continued for half an hour and then they were taken back to the show grounds."

Circus detective Atkinson worked closely with the Topeka police pointing out a few sharpers who were following the show. The *Blade* reported that there was not a fight, a drunk or a runaway on circus day.

Peter Sells of the Sells Brothers' show was in Topeka, but there is no report of his visiting the lot.

The *Commonwealth*, commenting on the matinee stated, "The weather was moderated and quite comfortable outside the tent, but inside, it was very warm."

The show claimed a seating capacity of 7,500, but attendance at the matinee exceeded 8,000, and the evening show played to a full house. The city collected a license fee of $100.

Other dates in the area included: July 22, Atchison; July 23, St. Joseph, Missouri; July 24, Leavenworth; July 25, Lawrence; July 28, Kansas City; July 29, Kansas City; July 30, Ottawa; July 31, Olathe; August 1, Paola.

The only displeasure with the coming of the Great London was expressed in a paragraph published July 19, in the Topeka *Colored Citizen*. "No doubt quite a number of our people have already laid aside their 50 cents for the circus, but remember that this amount will pay for the *Citizen* for four months, and thus you will be properly informed of what our people are doing throughout the country."

The most significant feature of the Great London was the electric light. Owners of large circuses were always among the first to take advantage of technological progress. Prior to Cooper and Bailey only a very small number of Americans had ever seen anything brighter than a kerosene lamp or a softly glowing gas jet. The electric light in 1879 was a miracle to the masses and the show's press department made the most of it. The following story appeared in every paper in every town:

"Great Show Lighted by Electricity

"Three Big Circus Tents As Bright At Night As At Mid-Day.

"The rapid pumping of an engine (steam) is heard as one passes the ticket man. It is this engine of thirty-five horsepower that drives the machine from which comes the electricity. All the paraphernalia necessary to produce the light is built upon a large wagon, constructed especially for the purpose, and this is to be 'toted' around the country for show purposes. The machine is the largest of the kind yet made, and its success in these tents is regarded as quite an advance toward the general introduction of such lights in amusement halls.

"The electricity is conducted from the machine to the lamps by several large cables made of seven strands of No. 15 copper wire covered with a layer of gutta percha, which is in turn cov-

ered by plaited layers of cotton. One light is equal to 3000 candle power, or nearly 200 gas lights, and is cheaper by seventy-five percent, than gas or oil. By varying the speed of the engine, the engineer can run from 1 to 17 lights, and the lamps in any of the departments can be turned off at will and without interfering with the arrangement in the other departments."

The newspaper ads proclaimed,

"GRAND ELECTRIC LIGHT
"NO OTHER SHOW HAS
IT...BEWARE OF FRAUDS."

Below a cut of the apparatus the show proclaimed:

"The effect of this truly marvelous light, when it is shown under our 168,000 YARDS OF SNOWY CANVAS is beautiful beyond the power of words to describe. Its soft, mellow, silvery, ethereal rays shed a halo of imperishable glory over all surrounding objects. It is, indeed

HEAVENS OWN GIFT TO EARTH

"It makes the darkest, densest, blackest night, into glorious sunlit day. It is like the rays of a dozen, dazzling suns concentrated. It melts steel without apparant heat. It illuminates a radius of two miles. It burns brilliantly under water. It causes gas to show its own shadow. It fairly glows with phosphorescent effulgence.

"Scientists wonder at it. Statesmen marvel at it. Philosophers bewildered at it. Cynics smile at it. Monarchs envy it. Frauds dread it. And the whole world adores it."

Lighting a circus performance before 1879 was a difficult and generally unsatisfactory accomplishment. In the beginning traveling shows used rushlights or oil lamps. A rush was constructed from the pith of various rushes dipped in tallow. Sixteen hundred rushes weighing about one pound and saturated with six pounds of tallow would make a torch that would burn for about an hour, but in the process much heat was released and copious smoke produced. If the performance could begin about six o'clock in the evening and be completed in the dusk with the illumination of one rushlight, the proprietor was well pleased.[1]

Oil lamps were more practical than rushlights and were more widely used. Astley's circus in London was lighted by 1200 floatwick oil lamps, the oil in glass containers of various colors.

Aime Argand, Swiss physicist, perfected an oil lamp in 1784 which increased illumination by a factor of ten. Argand's lamp had a cotton wick bent in tubular form which permitted a great increase in the air supply to the flame. The device required a copious supply of oil which Argand provided by a gravity feed from a tank higher than the flame. A valve in the conduit helped control the flame. Argand also invented the glass chimney which made a steadier, better ventilated light.

There were serious drawbacks to oil burning lamps--heat, consumption of oxygen, smoke and an unpleasant smell. As the level of oil in the supply tank decreased, the flame would become weak and smoky, but an excess of flow was more common leading also to a smoky flame and frequently causing a dangerous overspill.

Much of the trouble from oil lamps was eliminated when kerosene (paraffin oil) became readily available in the late 1860's. Kerosene seemed the perfect fuel. It produced a flame of good color, was nearly smokeless and was easy to handle and transport.

Gas lighting enjoyed a short lived popularity in the latter part of the 19th Century. Pall Mall in London had been illuminated by gas in January of 1807. It is interesting to note that gas lighting in this country did not become popular until 1816 when Peale's gas-lit museum in Baltimore created a sensation. The following year Baltimore had America's first gas illuminated streets.

Illuminating gas was reasonably easy to manufacture, requiring mainly a coke-oven for the distillation of coal and a system for the distribution of the coal gas. In 1852 the Paris winter circus was lit by 296 gas jets. The gas was also used by the fearless aeronauts whose balloons amazed and astonished the citizenry by rising a mile above earth where the professor would hang by his toe nails from a trapeze bar.

Tallow candles were perhaps the most impractical method of lighting an arena. One man would have all he could do to take care of 100 candles with the snuffing necessary to prevent guttering and obnoxious smoke. Beeswax candles were three times as expensive as ordinary tallow and did not gutter, but the expense prevented many shows from using them.

All of these systems had common deficiencies. They all generated heat. They all consumed oxygen needed by performers and audience. They all produced objectionable odors, some worse than others. All were fire hazards.

The answer to the problem was being sought in laboratories all over Europe. In Britain, Sir Humphrey Davy produced an electric arc lamp in 1810. By 1846 carbon arc lights were being used in English theaters. Electric lighting was hampered by inefficient generators incapable of sustaining a constant flow of current or sufficient current to meet the demand. Electromagnetic generators of 1860, without the engine to power them, were monstrously heavy pieces of equipment weighing several tons.

Several developments in arc lighting occurred at about the same time. In the early 1870's Siemens devised a better generator. The Jablochkoff candle appeared in 1876 making the arc more stable and easier to control.


LY MONITOR, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1879.

MAKE IT KNOWN TO EVERY ONE!

At Fort Scott Friday, October 10th, 1879.

AN UNDENIABLE ASSERTION!!

All Nature Indisputably Proves That No Equality Exists!

EVERY OBJECT, ANIMATE OR INANIMATE, MUST AND WILL HAVE THE GREATER AND LESS OF THEIR KIND.

THIS TELLS OF THE "BIG" SHOW.

"Proclaim it Throughout the Land, And to All the Inhabitants Thereof."

LARGEST AND BEST OF ALL SHOWS.

THE WELL KNOWN "LONDON" CIRCUS!

10 PERFORMING ELEPHANTS

Royal Bengal Tigers!

BRAZILIAN JAGUARS

Grave Digging HYENAS

AFRICAN LIONS,

Only Twenty Golden Chariots

THE BRUSH ELECTRIC LIGHT

Brush Electric Light.

The Great International Allied Shows Are Now Consolidated in One Grand and Glorious Exhibition!

THE GREAT LONDON SHOW!!

THE GREAT ELECTRIC LIGHT!

EIGHTEEN ELECTRIC LIGHT CHANDELIERS, YIELDING A VOLUME OF LIGHT EQUAL TO 35,000 GAS JETS.
OUR MOTIVE POWER IS THE MOST COMPLETE AND PERFECT

A MIRACLE!

SCIENTISTS BEWILDERED!

Brush Electric Light.

A WONDER!

THE PUBLIC MIND DAZED!

Brush Electric Light.

AND YET IT IS ONLY ONE OF OUR MANY NEW FEATURES.

AMONG ALL EXHIBITIONS THIS FAST CONSOLIDATION IS LOOKED UPON AS A MIGHTY JOVE, ALL OTHER SHOWS ARE LESSER SATELLITES IN ITS WAKE.

The Menagerie Absolutely Great. Herd of 10 Elephants.

This is the Giant among Shows.

This is the Giant Among Shows.

ARTISTS OF ACKNOWLEDGED SUPREMACY, SUCH AS

The Street Display is Bright, Beautiful and Brilliant.

The Cooper and Bailey name did not appear in some of the 1879 ads. This one was used for the October 10th stand in Fort Scott, Kansas. The show featured their electric lights. Pfening Archives.

An American, Charles Francis Brush (1849-1929), brought everything together in the Brush electric light. His success was based on an improved dynamo he devised in 1876. By 1878 Brush had improved the arc light and was beginning to manufacture complete lighting systems. He founded the Brush

Electric Company in 1880 and by 1884 there were 90,000 arc lights operating in the United States. It is a safe assumption that the advertising of the Great London show and its daily demonstration of the light's practicality had much to do with the instant success of the Brush system. Brush also devised a globe for his arc light which removed much of the harsh glare and made it more comfortable for human eyes.

The Great London used a two cylinder steam engine with an upright boiler, and, built on the rear of the wagon, a calliope. Any steam not required to spin the dynamo could be converted into beautiful music. Soon every circus that had the price was lit by electric lights. Shows that could not afford to turn night into day with the Brush electric light warned the public of damage to human eyes and even blindness caused by the brilliant arc.



The Strobridge Company produced a beautiful selection of lithographs for the Cooper and Bailey show in 1879. Pfening Archives.

There were other lights in existence in 1879 and later that were of minor importance to the circus world. Cresset lights were wreathed ropes soaked with pitch and burned in open work iron holders. Limelight, which is produced by heating lime in an oxy-hydrogen flame, was invented in 1796, and by 1856 was being used as a spotlight in London theatres.

Around 1900, acetylene lamps were given limited usage. The author remembers them being used in the late 1920's at the runs after the evening performance. The hissing light produced a harsh glare and had a range of about 50 yards.

One lighting system used by mud shows traveling at night was a torch of resinous pine carried by each wagon in the column. Most of the journeys began after the moonrise, but it must have been a charming sight on a dry road on a summer night to see a dozen torches spaced out along the march, each light flickering in the wind and bobbing about with the lurching wagon.

In a fit of ecstasy the Great London press department truthfully wrote,

"RESPLENDENT REDOLENT
REFULGENT
FAINTLY DESCRIBES THE
WONDERFUL ELECTRIC LIGHT."

The exhibition at Lawrence, July 25, drew a remarkable audience. *The Western Home Journal* carried the report on July 31:

"Indians Attend A Circus At Lawrence.

"The six Cheyenne warriors, Wild Hog, Old Man, Blacksmith, Left Hand, Run Fast, and Meheha, awaiting trial for their participation in the late Indian massacre [Dull Knife's raid of September, 1878, when forty Kansas settlers were killed], were taken to see the London circus yesterday. In some way they had heard of its coming and expressed a strong desire to see it. Messrs. Cooper, Bailey & Co., kindly extended the freedom of the exhibition to them and the officers who attended. It was the first thing of the kind they had seen, and they appeared to enjoy it thoroughly. About half-past two o'clock they marched into the menagerie in single file, and were shown one wild animal after another. The herd of elephants puzzled them very much, but they looked quietly and gravely at them, expressing no thought by word or gesture. The Bengal tigers and the lions, as they jumped and snarled behind the iron bars brought a peculiar gleam to the eyes of the red men. They seemed to recognize a nature akin to their own. The American lion, the red deer, the brown bear, all drew forth signs from two of the braves, who pointed westward and indicated by their motions that they had met these animals before. The camels were carefully scanned and passed for the herd of ponies upon which they looked with an eye that appreciated the beauty of the tiny things.

"Proceeding into the circus, they were seated by themselves, an officer at each end of them. The story of the cruel butcheries by the Cheyenne band was too fresh in the minds of the people to allow of their being seated without attracting attention. Every eye was soon turned upon them, and many a mother grasped her child as she heard the words, 'There are the Indians.' Two women rushed out of the tent with a child in each arm, nor could they be induced to return. When the people learned that the sheriff and his deputies were with them quietness was restored. At first the Indians assumed a grave look as their eyes roamed over the sea of humanity about them; but, as act after act went by, they gradually relaxed. Wild Hog said 'heap' when anything especially pleased him, the others testifying their approval by grunts. When Frank Melville rode his splendid act they became excited, and seemed to appreciate the full performance. It was the same when Billy Dutton went flying about the ring upon his horse, they again expressed their delight. The four-horse act of Madame Cordona, and the champion act of Charles Fish caused them to look in astonishment.

"When the clowns appeared they smiled approval of their antics, and when the lean clown flung the fat clown over the ring bank and then threw a colored boy upon him, Blacksmith laughed until he cried, while his companions shook their sides. Fans were given them and they kept up as vigorous a fanning as any lady. They were provided with lemonade, and each one got away with two glasses, and when the third was offered they simply pressed their abdomen and used the only English word they knew--'heap.' They enjoyed the performance and seemed disappointed when it was over. They were taken back to the jail after the show was over."

* * * * * *

There was an ad in the Osborne *County Farmer* October 9, 1879, announcing an exhibition of Hilliard, Hunting and Demott's Great Pacific Circus, in Osborne October 15. There is no information as to previous dates, or exhibitions on October 16, 17 and 18, but an ad in the Concordia *Blade* announced exhibitions in Concordia on Monday, October 20.

We know from the ads that the Great Pacific Circus was, "The only legitimate entertainment on this Continent."

Top billing went to Le Petit Jose, "The Centaur Child wonder. Apparantly

cradled on horseback, and the very Sylph of the Saddle."

Robert Hunting, James Demott, the Fisher Brothers, the Sherman Brothers, and Fisher and Rearick, in the order named, completed the listing of featured actors.



Performing tigers are shown in this 1879 Cooper and Bailey lithograph. "Copyright by A. A. Stewart" appears in small type in the lower right hand corner. Pfening Archives.

Fisher and Rearick were only "America's Greatest Tumblers and Champion Double Somersault Throwers."

The Sherman Brothers were "America's Famous Gymnasts, who really seem to bear a charmed life. Their daring feats in mid air hold the spectator in breathless suspense."

The Fisher Brothers, "In their astonishing evolutions on the Horizontal Bar. During which they will in conjunction with other marvelous feats, turn Complete Somersaults after relaxing their hold from a Giant Swing."

"The Celebrated and Highly Trained Arabian Trick Stallions, Excelsior and White Hawk," were presented by James Demott.

The ads described Robert Hunting as "Jester, Conversationalist and Clown, modest but brilliant, wit and repartee without vulgarity, satirical without offense. A veritable genius in the tented Temple of Momus."

Other performers, listed as "Auxiliaries," were Mons. Jaques, J. Russell, Charles Disco, Dell Skinner, Lou Diamond, Frank Dagwell, Baker Brothers, Chas. O'Brien, D. W. Stewart.

"The show did not produce a parade, but the public was urged to "Look Out for the Gorgeous BAND CHARIOT 'ROMAHO,' Drawn by Ten Beautiful Horses, and containing Prof. H. M. King's Famous Golden Band, Brilliantly Uniformed, which will pass through the streets on the day of exhibition. This Chariot is a magnificent affair, and was built for this concern at a cost of $3,000."

"ADMISSION, 50 CENTS. CHILDREN UNDER 9, 25 CENTS."

"There was much excitement at the circus last night," the Osborne *County Farmer* stated on October 15. "The wind and rain created a panic among the people in attendance. Several of the tent poles gave way and the lights became extinguished. Many persons, unable to gain egress through the door, cut their way out through the canvas. There was great confusion. No one was seriously hurt."

The Concordia *Blade* carried no comment on the show, but ads appeared October 11 and 18 for the exhibition of October 20.

On October 25, the show appeared in Marysville. The *Marshall County News* reported November 1, that, "The circus was here last Saturday, and at night the saloons were filled with drunken men. Two fellows were nearly killed by being struck with beer glasses, and the grist of 'stiffs' at the Police Court Monday morning were numerous. The circus wished to winter here, but the police expenses now are all that the tax payers wished to keep up."

Where the show wintered is unknown.

* * * * * *

Van Amburgh & Co's New Great Golden Menagerie, Circus & Colosseum billed Council Grove for exhibitions September 25, 1879. Substantiation of the announced date is unobtainable for the Council Grove *Republican* made no comment concerning the show. It is a reasonable assumption that if Van Amburgh had failed to appear it would have made news in the *Republican's* columns.

Van Amburgh was the life work of Hyatt Frost who boasted in print that he had managed the show for 34 consecutive years--since 1845.

"BEHOLD--THE ENTIRE WORLD ON WHEELS!! Requiring the constant employment of One Hundred and Eighty Five People and 210 Head of Horses!!"

How badly inflated the figures might be is unknown, but it was obviously a pleasant and successful show.



The Van Amburgh show played Kansas in 1879 and 1880. It wintered in Valley Falls, Kansas. Kansas State Historical Society.

On November 1, the Valley Falls *New Era* confirmed the rumors that had been racing about the town: "The Great Van Amburgh & Co's show exhibits here on Wednesday next. The whole of this mammoth institution will winter in Valley Falls. Mr. Frost, manager, is here putting up his buildings on the Fair Ground."

Also on November 1, the *New Era* ran a handout puffing the show in general terms--"Large and attractive as it always has been, the show now is more

extensive than ever heretofore." It would be a miserable circus that was not "this year bigger and better than ever before."

Also, November 1, the *New Era* carried a full page advertisement of Van Amburgh and Company for the exhibitions of November 5. Pre-dating the Sells brothers, the ad began with "The Great Mastodon Is Coming." The ads of Hyatt Frost were always delightful reading.

In the menagerie were

"COLOSSAL SPECIMENS OF ANIMATED NATURE.
"THESE WONDERS OF CREATION ARE THE MOST RARE AND REMARKABLE TO BE FOUND IN CAPTIVITY.
"A GRAND VIZER AMONG ANIMALS.
"NATURE'S MARVELS CONGREGATED.
"THE AERONAUTIC OSCILLATIONS AWAKEN IN THE SPECTATORAN UNUSUAL DEGREE OF INTEREST.
"THE WONDERFUL GYRATIONS AND EVOLUTIONS.
"SUPER-IMINENT IN STATION.
"UNEQUALED IN CHRISTENDOM.
"WHEREVER CIVILIZATION EXTENDS.
"EQUESTRIAN BANQUET.
"ZOOLOGICAL ECCENTRICITIES.
"ABNORMAL IN ITS MAGNITUDE!

"Its success is Unparalled in the history of shows, and its REPUTATION IS UNSULLIED, And its show possessions LITERALLY ENORMOUS."

Barnum, himself, could not have said it better, and, when the spirit moved, Frost did not hesitate to use Barnum's greatest phrase, "The Greatest Show On Earth."

"'Bolivar,' Van Amburgh's big elephant, wouldn't cross the bridge at Lawrence," the *New Era* reported, "and hoofed around by way of Topeka, and got here as soon as the show did; but they missed him in Oskaloosa."

The *New Era,* November 8. stated: "Their entertainment here last Wednesday was largely attended--probably over 2000 people looked with strained eyes and thrilling interest at the wonderful gyrations and evolutions in the circus. Everyone pronounced the show very good. The menagerie is a great deal more complete than was expected, in fact Van Amburgh & Co., have one of the largest and best selections of animals traveling. Every attache of the consolidation made himself particularly polite and pleasant to visitors. With this show we failed to see the usual number of gamblers, dead beats, shysters and frauds generally, that follow other shows; the managers don't allow them about."

Immediately after the last exhibition the show went into winter quarters on the fair grounds at Valley Falls. At least two buildings were erected by the show and stalls and dens were built to accommodate the "Wonders of Creation." Harness and canvas were stored in Hillyer's brick building on North Sycamore street.



Cover of the 16 page courier issued by the 1880 P. T. Barnum show. Zazel is depicted on the back cover. Pfening Archives.

Frost disbursed $10,000 among his employees at the closing of the season according to the Holton *Signal*. Most of the show's employees left quickly for homes all over the nation. The sudden exodus drew 24 railroad ticket agents to Valley Falls. Competition for the travel business brought the fare to New York down to $13.50. About 25 men remained throughout the winter. A few employees found jobs in Valley Falls, such as William Loper, Van Amburgh's butcher, who went to work at his trade in Mitchell's market.

The top management of the show was treated with the utmost respect.

Hyatt Frost left Valley Falls late in November, not to return until the new year. His place was taken by his brother Charles.

Other executives were O. J. Ferguson, treasurer; C. W. Kidder, contracting agent; W. H. Hough, press agent; and M. C. Crane, assistant manager. The *New Era* reported, November 29, that, "Mr. O. J. Furgerson (sic), Van Amburgh & Co's Treasurer, and a first rate old gentleman, left, last Friday for his home in New York." The show ordered some new wagons from St. Louis and five new cages from Cincinnati, new tents and "half an express car of rare African Antelopes."

December 20, the *New Era* reported "Twelve more new wagons arrived here last Saturday for Van Amburgh & Co., from St. Louis. They are a nobby lot. Mr. Crane informs that the animals are all getting along finely and the men all think Valley Falls the boss town to winter in."

Not all of the animals were snug and comfortable and "getting along finely," for December 27, the *New Era* commented, "A prarie dog, guinea-pig and three handsome parquets (sic) belonging to Van Amburgh's Menagerie, froze to death Wednesday night. Old Bolivar keeps warm and is happy."

In the first week of January, Treasurer Ferguson returned to the show and Assistant Manager Crane left on the same day for New York. A mystery that was never solved occured in the night of January 8. Unusual sounds coming from the stables prompted Perry Murphy, the show's night watchman to take his lantern and investigate. The lantern was suddenly knocked from his hand by an unseen assailant and the struggle continued on the floor in complete darkness. The fight was progressing vigorously when Murphy suddenly realized his enemy was armed with a knife. Murphy broke loose and the intruder fled. "The fellow got away and Murphy was not hurt badly," the *New Era* reported, "but his vest was cut and had it not been for the watch in his pocket he would probably have been carved up considerably."

Hyatt Frost arrived from Amenia, New York, February 21, coming by way of Cincinnati and St. Louis, and thereafter preparations for the new season proceeded rapidly. All of the blacksmith and wagon shops in Valley Falls were put to work on the show wagons.

"A very fine and expensive Bengal Tiger, belonging to Van Amburgh & Co's menagerie, wintering here, died last week," according to the *New Era,* March 13. "This is quite a loss. Mr. Frost informs us that $1,000 will not get another one nearly as valuable."

The advertising crew had finished

papering Valley Falls and environs by March 27, and on that day C. W. Kidder, contracting agent, W. H. Hough, press agent, Thomas Dailey and Art Reed, advance agents and a paste brigade of ten men left Valley Falls to spread glad tidings of great joy throughout the land.

On April 10, Van Amburgh & Co's New Great Golden Menagerie Consolidated with Frost's Roman Circus and Hippodrome began the season of 1880 with two exhibitions in Valley Falls. The *New Era,* April 3, expressed the sentiments of the entire community: "We speak of the 'show people' as we and every citizen has found them when we say, their record stands 'A No. 1' without exception. There is not a mechanic, artisan or merchant in Valley Falls that have not been directly benefitted, pecuniarily, by Mr. Frost's presence, and our citizens, without exception, will regret his departure. We hope our readers, one and all, will join our citizens on Saturday of next week and crowd the canvas of the great Show at each performance, to its utmost capacity. The advertisement will be found in our paper to-day."

The ad was full page and nearly identical with that used in November.

The *New Era* reviewed the show on April 17: "Van Amburgh & Co's show last Saturday, drew a tremendous crowd of people to the city, and we presume not less than 2000 persons visited the afternoon entertainment, and the evening attendance was very good. The show, taken as a whole, is a good one, and the men connected with it are gentlemen of the first order.

"The performance in the circus ring was up to the average circus performance. 'Tis true, some of the horses were a little green, and some of the riders were a little nervous, and the band had not got down to ring business, but now we venture not a blunder is made. The Ring Master, Mr. Rivers, thoroughly understands his business; Andy Gaffney, the stout man, can't be beat; the Rice boys are the boss athletes; their four clowns are funny enough, their trick horses and trick mules do remarkably laughable things, and everything is conducted in a gentlemanly and high-toned manner."

One result of Van Amburgh's stay in Valley Falls was the marriage of Clarence Burton, 26 years old to Sarah Pitman, 27 years old, on September 2, 1880. Burton performed on the horizontal bars as one of the "Rice Brothers." The bride had divorced her husband in 1879 for desertion and, in spite of having two children, returned to her maiden name of Pitman. The wedding took place in Valley Falls in the parlor of the French Hotel. The couple were serenaded by the town's Cornet Band. Immediately after the ceremony the family left for New York City where Burton had a three-week's engagement to be followed by a winter-long booking in Cuba.



Miss EMMA LAKE, America's Side Saddle Queen, as she appears at each performance.

This illustration of Emma Lake appears inside the 1879 Barnum courier. She was a feature when the Barnum show played Kansas the next year. Pfening Archives.

Van Amburgh booked Hiawatha for Tuesday, April 23, but the day was blown. The Hiawatha *Dispatch* explained the difficulty: "Van Amburgh's Circus, owing to the high wind that prevailed on Tuesday could not make a show here. They tried repeatedly to raise the tent but could not get it up.

"There was a great number of people in town, some from Doniphan county and they were no doubt considerably disappointed in having to keep their money, but perhaps not so much so as the showmen in not being able to get it. The showmen were the most orderly and well behaved set connected with any circus we ever saw. They had no swindling games going on, paid their bills promptly without grumbling, and endeavored to merit patronage by their good behavior."

Van Amburgh played Seneca, April 17, but all the comment the Seneca *Courier* could give was, "There was not a 'snide' of any shape traveling with Van Amburgh's show at Seneca."

The *Marshall County News,* Marysville, ran a large ad and three handouts for Van Amburgh's date of April 21. The *News* made no comment on the exhibitions, but on April 24, carried a remarkable story from Waterville concerning the show's appearance there on Thursday, April 22.

"A Genuine Endorsement of a Good Show.

"We the undersigned citizens of Waterville, Kansas, having attended Van Amburgh & Co's Menagerie in this place to-day are happy to state that the business department of the establishment is conducted on the strictest principles of integrity, the audience was not annoyed by any impudent candy peddlers, and there was no games of chance, wheels of fortune, three card monte, or other schemes or devices for robbing an unsophisticated public and we cheerfully recommend to the kind consideration of our brother officials and the public wherever they may go.

"J. W. Sharrad, Mayor; M. J. Scott, Councilman; W. R. Wilson, Marshal; J. J. Sproul; C. F. Scouten; Geo. Stevenson."

Weekly newspapers in 1880 followed an almost uniform layout of their pages. Nearly all in Kansas consisted of only four pages. The front page carried largely syndicated feature stories with brief glimpses of international events, and frequently, advertising. Page two was strongly political and carried the editor's opinions and endorsements. Local news was found on page three in columns of brief paragraphs and one-liners. Front page local news was rare, and even village murders remained on page three. Want ads, patent medicines and mentions of local merchants occupied page four. The front page might devote half a column to what the Prince of Wales had for breakfast and not a word on the shooting at the show grounds. Royal digestion took precedence over home-made crime. The pages of the Washington *Republican* on April 16, carried scant local news on page three. The editor published the following apology which scarcely concealed his delight.

"We devote a large portion of our paper this week to the use of our circus editor. The Circuses, like the fourth of July, come but once a year, and therefore we feel disposed to give them a reasonable amount of latitude--especially when they pay well for it."

The issue contained two handouts for the show and a three-column ad that ran the length of the page. Washington was billed for Friday, April 23, but there is no report confirming the show's appearance.

1880

W. W. Cole's Circus, Menagerie, Aquarium and Congress of Living Wonders, then in its tenth year, returned to Kansas in 1880 for several dates including the following: July 10, Leavenworth; July 12, Wellington; July 13, Winfield; July 14, Independence; July 15, Humboldt; July 16, Ottawa; July 17, Lawrence; July 19, Topeka; July 20, Wamego; July 21, Junction City; July 22, Abilene; July 23, McPherson; July 24, Salina.

Humboldt had its first view of the Cole organization on July 11, when the show train stopped to feed and water the animals. The show was en route from Leavenworth to Wellington, a jump of about 260 miles. Humboldt was the half way mark. The Humboldt *Union* commented, July 13, "Cole's show stopped here last Sunday, on its way to Wellington. The animals were fed, and the actors and the fat couple came uptown for their meals. Quite a large crowd was at the depot." Did the reporter mean Captain and Mrs. Bates, the giants, who were once again trouping with Cole?

Featured in the advertising were the "Six Famous Trick Stallions" who waltzed in three couples, marched erect on their hind feet, sat in chairs, drilled like soldiers, rode a see-saw, and one agile horse jumped over another.

The "Mammoth Kansas Ox" standing six feet tall at the shoulder and weighing 3100 lbs was, in Cole's estimation, "the largest specimen of the cattle species ever discovered." Cole offered $5,000 for an ox that could equal his.

It was a good year for cattle on the Cole show. A new feature was an imported performing Spanish bull. "Together with his trainer, a real Palidor (bull fighter) of Madrid. This animal waltzes, rears, jumps gates, and concludes with a sham bull fight, in which he oftimes is too 'true to nature.'"

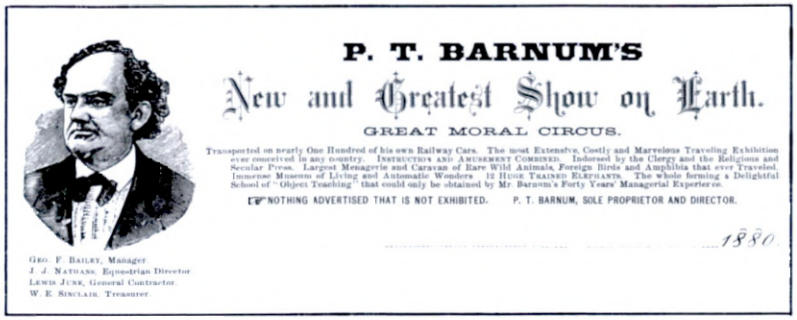
Many a Kansas farmer had a bull with exactly the same talents, but to see a bull that performed these feats on command was worth the price of a ticket. The press department scored a triumph when the parade was described as "the most GORGEOUS, GLITTERING GALAXY OF GOLDEN GLORY ever witnessed on this continent."

"Thursday was warm but pleasant and a large crowd was in attendance," reported the *Union*, July 17. "We have had a circus and the boys big and little are satisfied."

Beyond all doubt the most important addition to the Cole show was the Brush electric light. Every major show had to adopt the miracle light or abandon all pretense of being first-class. After 1872 all the great shows travelled by rail. After 1879 all the great shows had electric lights.

Louis E. Cooke, advance agent for Cole, was in Topeka, July 2, arranging for exhibitions on July 19. Three of Topeka's papers carried ads for the show beginning July 5. Handouts were placed with the *Capital* and the *Journal*.

One story used everywhere concerned "a pair of enormous sea elephants, a species of amphibia which have long been supposed extinct.



The 1880 letterhead of the P. T. Barnum's New and Greatest Show on Earth. Pfening Archives.

"The peculiarities of these Diantherums[2] of the deep are their resemblance to the ordinary African elephants. That is, so far as the head and proboscis or the trunk is concerned. They are more than three times as large as the sea lions, and from statistical facts it is learned that one of these monsters will produce as much spermatic oil as a full-grown Arctic whale. The two animals now in Mr. Cole's show were captured on the Pacific coast, and shipped directly to him by Captain Mullet, the famous marine explorer."

Although the zoology lesson as delivered by the press department is somewhat misleading, to put it mildly, seeing the two brutes would be an exciting educational experience for any Kansas farm boy.

A handout in the *Kansas Farmer*, July 7, described the act of the featured famous De Comas troupe: "Their performance consists of riding an ordinary bicycle upon a wire, something over 50 feet from the ground, and to this is attached a trapeze of the usual manufacture, upon which two of the brothers accomplish a number of thrilling exploits while the bicycle rider propels them from one end of the canvas to the other with the velocity of wind."

On show day the *Journal* reported: "W. W. Cole, with his great circus and stupendous confederation of allied shows, whose illustrations on the bill boards for the past three weeks furnished admiration for the gazing eyes of thousands, arrived in the city over the U. P. road from Lawrence early this morning and erected his mammoth pavilion, bedecked with the banners of every nation, on the old grounds at the corner of Tenth avenue and Monroe street. Soon after his arrival the people began to pour in from every direction and in all kinds of shapes until 11 o'clock, when the gorgeous street parade took place. Kansas avenue was a swaying mass of humanity, stretching from the Court House (Fourth street) to Eighth street. "The street parade was, as advertised, one of the greatest pageantries that humanity could wish to see, displaying a tremendous turnout of guilded splendor and martial elegance.

"At this afternoon's performance fully five thousand people were gathered beneath the three acres of canvas, and among this city of tents to witness the wonders collected there."

Describing the parade the *Capital* reported, "The crowd was big and the parade a first class one. The large bandwagon drawn by camels followed the lead of a gentleman on horseback, warning the people to 'hold your horses,' and played excellent music. Then came some magnificent horses with bright new trappings. The fine, well kept appearance of the group of trained stallions as they filed along in twos was remarked by all, and when the snake charmer in his den of reptiles appeared, the interest of the spectators became greatly increased. A large serpent coiled about his neck, made him an object of notice that the man with the lions failed to attract. Then came the long line of cages, the rear of the procession brought up by the always necessary steam calliope. The procession is deserving of full praise as such and as an indication of what the show is will cause a large attendance this afternoon and evening."

Albert E. Richards on show day made the rounds of the newspaper offices paying advertising bills, shaking hands, telling stories, handing out tickets and being an all around good fellow. After the show had left town each of the papers referred to Richards in much the same vein as did the *Commonwealth*?

"The *Commonwealth* returns thanks

to A. E. Richards, press agent for Cole's show, for favors. Mr. Richards is one of the most polite gentlemen in the profession."



Zazel was shown in the 1880 newspaper ad of the P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth. Circus World Museum collection.

The *Journal* reported that, as the show was packing up two employees served Cole with a summons for their wages. The matter was quickly and amicably settled.

The *Journal* reported several incidents of circus day that the other papers missed, like the two that follow: "A weak woman fainted this afternoon in the show by seeing a pecary eat a live snake for its dinner.

"One of Cole's grave-robbing, man eating Hyenas snapped a country boy's finger off this afternoon, which is a warning for other boys to stand back a little and see just as well."

The performance was well received, as noted by the *Capital,* July 20, which selected a few of the acts for special mention, "The feat of Mr. Frank Gardner, that of vaulting camels and elephants, the distance fifty feet and height fifteen, turning a double somersault on the passage through the air, showed to what perfection he had brought his thrilling and dangerous art. The very neat and pretty performance of the two ponies, Humboldt and Hindoo, that of balancing and playing see-saw on a board was greeted with much applause. Mr. Conklin, the lion tamer, evinced his power over the monarch of the jungles by entering a den of those powerful creatures and causing them to display the docility of kittens in their obedience to his words of command.

"Nothing was as pleasing, however, either in appearance, or action, as the six stallions. Seldom does the eye rest upon an aggregate of horseflesh more intelligent. Their evolutions in the ring were stately and full of energy and fire, but their departure was the climax to all of their interesting activities, each one walking off upon his hind legs, and with fore feet and head aloft, and plume nodding in the air their aspect was superb."

The Wamego *Tribune*, speaking of the performance of July 20, agreed with the Topeka *Capital* that, "The trained stallions were just as advertised, and was to our fancy, the most interesting feature of the circus. To sum up, Cole's menagerie and circus is splendid in every feature." The *Tribune* estimated the attendance for the two exhibitions at a total of 6,000.

The Topeka *Daily Commonwealth* on July 22, reported, "Shot. It is reported that at Wamego, on Tuesday night, the manager of Cole's circus was shot by one of the employees. Our informant could give no particulars."

Had there been a shooting at the circus, surely the Wamego *Tribune* would have reported it, but a careful search of the *Tribune* columns failed to find any such report and it must, therefore, be considered as nothing more than a baseless rumor.

The Abilene *Gazette* on July 30, reporting on the exhibitions of July 22, stated "Cole's show attracted about 5,000 people to town on last Thursday. Some of the features of the exhibition were first-class."

Circus day was a day of prosperity for local merchants as the huge crowds that invaded the small towns came with money to spend and the showmen did not get it all. It was a day of hard work for retailers, and many a merchant arrived on the lot in the evening too late for the opening extravaganza. Restaurants were the most obvious beneficiaries of the gathered multitudes. Not every one brought a basket lunch, or gingerbread. According to the *Gazette*, "The Merchants hotel fed two hundred persons last Thursday--show day."

In Salina, the Saline *County Journal,* July 29, commenting on the exhibitions of July 24, related that, "The exhibition of the trained horses was very fine. The 'horse part' of the circus was good throughout. The Daniel-in-the-lions'-den performance was a daring one--equal to the best of that kind. One pleasant feature of the circus was the almost total absence of the clown. No coarse, worn-out jokes were rehashed.

"The electric light at night was a new and interesting feature. The day was a paying one for the circus people."

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P. T. Barnum's Own and Only Greatest Show On Earth got off to an early start for the exhibitions in Topeka on August 18, 1880. On March 23, the *Capital* reported that "Mr. Frank M. Kelsh, the advance agent for P. T. Barnum's greatest show on earth, paid us a visit yesterday. He is here for the purpose of completing arrangements for the exhibition of the vast show, which will positively be here on Wednesday, the 18th day of August, afternoon and evening. His preliminary printing is already on the walls; the license has been granted and so our amusement lovers--when Barnum comes--that means the entire community--may 'posses their souls in patience' and wait for *'Barnum Day'* to see what is really and truly 'the greatest show on earth.'"

The Barnum show kept up its rapid pace by covering Topeka's billboards with Barnum's picture, according to the *Journal*, April 23.

The *Journal* reported, July 8, that, "Another of P. T. Barnum's advance men mysteriously struck this city after dark last night, and left again before daylight this morning, and now the boys eagerly study the billboards and

read the wonders of the world's attractions."

On July 17, another squad of Barnum's advance guard was in Topeka and left a few more attractions on the billboards. The contracting agent and banner hangers were also present.

Barnum's advance car was back in Topeka August 5, and on a siding at the Union Pacific depot in North Topeka. The *Capital* carried a description of the advertising car. "It is sixty-three and one-half feet in length and the exterior is covered with some of the most beautiful paintings that were ever seen in the west. The artist is Mr. James Walker, a gentleman whose name is not unknown to fame as a great painter. A number of persons were improving their opportunities by gazing on these beautiful pictures of wild beasts at the time of our reporter's visit this morning.

"The interior of the car is divided into four departments, the first being what they call the 'work end' filled with drawers for holding cuts and tools for pasting up bills. The potato starch, of which they use three barrels a day, is kept in a box in this room. A cozy little office with a bed, lounge and writing desk separates the 'work end' from the sleeping apartment. The mattresses here are placed along both sides of the car at an elevation of about five feet and the space beneath divided into compartments each filled with enough posters for a days work. At the end of the sleeping room which is the largest department of the car, is the wash room and dresser, the whole consisting a first-class miniature hotel on wheels. The conductor of the car is Mr. T. A. Keeler, and the veteran press agent, who, of course called on the *Capital*, is Mr. Chas. Gaylor, a gentleman who is known to the theatrical world as a writer of several plays. These gentlemen have charge of the car and the sixteen other men who travel with them to assist in attending the work of P. T. Barnum's big show. The car is said to have cost $20,000, the painting on the exterior costing nearly half that amount, and travels by fastening on the regular express of the road and is hauled by this means from city to city."

The advance crew put up at the Tefft House while in Topeka.

The *Journal* noted that, "Hundreds of our citizens visited the car and were greatly delighted with its beauty. The decorations on its sides were painted by James Walker, the celebrated artist who produced on canvas the wonderful battles of 'Lookout Mountain' and of 'Gettysburg.' For the work on the car he received the neat little sum of $8,000."

Newspaper advertising began August 7, in the *Capital* and repeated August 10 and 17. The *Journal* and the *Commonwealth* ran identical ads, the *Commonwealth*, August 8, 11, 15, and 18, and the *Journal*, August 11, 14 and 17. A catch phrase ran through all the advertising, repeated over and over--"When Barnum Comes."

When Barnum Comes, you will see "Madame Dockrill riding four and six bareback horses."

When Barnum Comes, you will see "Zazel in her Great Aerial Dive or Eagle Swoop, being shot from a Cannon to the topmost height of the pavilion from which she dives head foremost through the air nearly 100 feet."

When Barnum Comes you will see:

The Tattooed Greek

Signor Sebastian, Sensational Bareback Rider

Yoke of Trained Oxen from Worcester, Massachusetts

20 Trained Stallions

Salamander, the Fire Horse

The Performing Stag, Landseer

Madame Nelson, La charmeuse des colombes, with her flock of trained doves.

John Batchelor, Champion Leaper

Advertising also mentioned that the latest version of The *Life of Barnum,* written by himself, could be purchased on the show grounds, 50 cents cloth bound, paper 20 cents. Barnum was also willing to let the public buy a copy of his latest story "Lion Jack" for only 75 cents. The newspaper advertising was a personal statement from the great man--Barnum advertising Barnum, but falling a trifle short of being the Greatest Man on Earth.

"The Only Barnum Is Coming!

"I pledge my professional reputation and my personal word that my show for the season of 1880 contains more novelties, is more extensive, beautiful, and in every way the grandest and best entertainment I ever presented to the public. And it will be presented here complete and without curtailment in any of its departments. P. T. BARNUM."

The ad mentioned exhibitions at Leavenworth, August 16; Lawrence, August 17; and Kansas City, August 19.

The *Capital* published a letter, August 17, purportedly written by P. T. Barnum at the Leavenworth stand, August 16:

"The statement in the Atchison *Champion* of August 15th, that my show was divided at that point, ten cars going to Missouri, etc., is without the least foundation. It is impossible for such division to take place, as there can be but one Zazel, one Dockrill, one Sebastian, one Nelson Family, and one each of the great features which combined, make mine indeed the greatest show on earth! Each and every one of the great specialties given in New York, Boston and Chicago, will be reproduced at every performance in the west.

"The public's obediant servant, P. T. Barnum."


P. T. BARNUM'S
DAILY PROGRAMME
"OWN AND ONLY GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH."
For the Week ending Saturday, May 15th, 1880.
P. T. BARNUM, SOLE PROPRIETOR | GEO. F. BAILEY, GENERAL MANAGER.
SOMETHING NEW!!
A TEMPERANCE DRINK
MOLEOT
For Families during the Hot Season. It cannot be Excelled.
BELFAST GINGER ALE
TONIC BEERS,
Apollinaris & Hunyadi
MINERAL WATERS,
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MOSES FAIRBANKS & CO.,
Howard Athenæum Building,
HOWARD ST., BOSTON
Cheapest Place in the World to Buy
CORSETS,
MRS. CHARLOTTE M. ADAMS GARRY
508 Washington St.
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Domestic Corsets,
Long Abdominal Corsets,
French Woven Corsets,
MOULDING
Elegant SPOON BUSK CORSETS,
Latest Styles of French Hoop Skirts and Paniers, from Worth's.
PROGRAMME.
(Subject to Alteration.)
1. RING PROCESSION and GRAND ENTREE by 24 Ladies and Gentlemen of the Company.
2. Introduction of LIVING CURIOSITIES, (with appropriate Lecture),—CAPT. CONSTENIUS, the Tattooed Greek; Colonel GOSHEN, the Palestine Giant; The Native ZULUS and QUEEN MAB, the tiny Dwarf.
3. Introduction of the Wonderful black TRAKENE STALLIONS, by MONS. H. M. DOCKRILL.
4. THE NELSON FAMILY, in their Novel Acts.
"ZAZEL GALOP," by F. W. MEACHAM, will be performed during this act.
5. DOUBLE *ACTE DE MANEGE*, by MADAME MARINA and HERR NEYGGARD.
6. SIGNORA MASCELLUS, in her Classical PRINCIPAL ACT.
The Great Clown, JOHN ROBINSON.
LOWEST PRICES!
"SOHMER"
CASH OR TIME!
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503 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON.
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ROOMS—75 CENTS, AND UPWARDS
A CARD.
POND'S EXTRACT
PPP
Physicians
PAIN
PURELY

Cover of the P. T. Barnum program used for the one week stand in Boston starting May 15, 1880. Pfening Archives.

The ads with their repetitious phrase "When Barnum Comes" and the letter quoted above surely caused many people to buy tickets primarily to see the famous man himself, but the inference of Barnum's presence was fraudulent and deliberately misleading. There is no record that Barnum ever visited Topeka, or that he appeared at any of the Kansas dates of 1880. Wherever Barnum was, he was not in Kansas.

"No accident ever happened to Zazel in her thrilling and apparantly dangerous performance and in the nature of the case no accident ever will occur to her," so stated a letter signed P. T. Barnum and printed in the *Journal* August 13. "Mr. Farini, the inventor of the particular cannon from which Zazel is fired into space, always superintends every detail in person. The nets into which the young girl makes her startling and graceful 'aerial dive' are made

in London especially for that purpose, are critically inspected before each entertainment and are replaced by new ones every two weeks. On the occasion of her debut in New York she was fired from the cannon's mouth for the four thousand and first time. I pay Zazel $250 per day, or $78,000 a year. I should never have invested in this large sum in any feature, however attractive, had I not known it was placed beyond the chance of accident. P. T. Barnum."



Captain Costentenus, the Greek tattooed man, sold this full color card in the Barnum sideshow in 1880. Pfening Archives.

"It was five o'clock this morning," the *Journal* reported, "when Barnum's special train of seventy-five cars bearing his own and only greatest show on earth arrived at this city. It came over the Union Pacific road from Lawrence, and will return to-night via the same route to Kansas City. After sidetracking in North Topeka, every thing was at once transfered from the cars to the regular show grounds at the corner of Tenth avenue and Madison street where the city of mammoth waterproof tents was erected. True to his advertisement the grand procession made its appearance at 9 o'clock and gave the finest street parade ever witnessed in this city. At that early hour the Avenue was crowded with people for a distance of several blocks, yet thousands arrived later and were disappointed."

Nowhere in the advertising in the newspapers is there any mention of elephants. Elephants do not occur in the parade stories. The only mention is contained in a handout relating that John Batchellor leaped over six of the creatures. Neither is there any mention of electric lights.

In a different column the *Journal* reported, "A large number of our country friends were on hand by daylight this morning and bivouacked in the open squares and vacant lots about the city where they breakfasted, and then laid on their arms for a couple hours rest before the great procession."

One of the best ways to judge the number of out-of-towners attending a circus was by the volume of business at the livery barns. The day after the show the *Journal* commented on the number of visitors to Topeka. "Frank B. Low says that one hundred and ninety-four horses received Livery accommodations yesterday and that 101 wagons were in his yards at one time."

The *Commonwealth* recorded a visit on show day from R. W. Malone, who had charge of the reserved seats. The *Journal* revealed the true importance of the gentleman. "W. Malone is the gentlemanly young agent who called today with a large bag of money representing the press department of Mr. Barnum's own and only show on earth."

Street vendors," the *Journal* commented, "have been as thick in this town to-day as Indians in Deadwood, and offering for sale nearly every worthless contrivance under the sun."

The *Capital* published the following account of the parade: "The street parade was begun at 9 o'clock, and passed up and down Kansas avenue. A crowd witnessed the array of glittering vehicles as they formed in line. Gen. Waterman, as he is styled, the oldest circus man in the United States, headed the procession. Then came the gorgeous band chariot with music, followed by Prince Neygaard and his twelve trained stallions. There were the chariot of Neptune, glittering with gold and spangled tinsel; the chariot of the Golden Organ of Vienna, or automatic military band, 'equal to fifty musicians,' Queen Mab's jeweled coach, drawn by sixteen midget ponies; the chariot calliope, steam music; the chariot of Ursa, and many other chariots; a herd of white and black camels; and a pair of dromedaries the riders of which experienced a see-saw motion that if they enjoyed they deceived their looks."

The *Commonwealth* estimated attendance "between five and six thousand people in the afternoon and more at the night performance." The circus claimed 10,000 seats.

The *Journal* said it all with one simple statement, "That show is immense."

Barnum played Marysville, August 12, coming from a stand at Lincoln, Nebraska, on August 11.

The *Marshall County News,* August 14, reported that, "Barnum has sued the Union Pacific railroad for $20,000 damages, claimed to have been received in a railroad accident.

"Barnum's Sea Lion was injured in a railroad accident on the Union Pacific road, and died in this city Thursday. Three of his best horses died here."

The Marysville stand was a day of frustration for Barnum's Own and Only, the climax to the day being reported in the following story:

"Barnum's Circus.

"Barnum's great show drew a large crowd to the city last Thursday. Four thousand five hundred tickets were sold to the afternoon performance. Everything was first-class, and as advertised. The managers were compelled to give up the evening performance, leaving here at six o'clock to reach St. Joseph on time."

* * * * * *

A show of unknown scale, Wm. T. Thornton's Famous Berlin Museum and Menagerie, St. Louis Circus and Cosmopolitan Allied Shows was picking up a few dates in August while Barnum was skimming the cream. August 12, Osage Mission; August 14, Humboldt; August 16, Emporia; August 17, Junction City; August 18, Council Grove; August 20, Chanute; August 21, Oswego.

An ad in the Humboldt *Union*, August 7, claimed, "This is one of the OLDEST AND BEST SHOWS on the road, now on its Sixth Annual Tour." The ad described the aggregation as "one of the best RAILROAD SHOWS THAT TRAVELS," but no information is given regarding the number of cars required to move it. No mention is made of a parade or band chariot circulating through the principal streets, but according to the ad in the Emporia *News*, "Three grand outside exhibitions will be given in the afternoon and immediately preceding the opening of the doors."

On August 21, the Humboldt *Union*, a weekly paper, commented briefly on the exhibitions of Saturday, August 14; "The show did not attract a very large crowd. The circus performance was good, and the performing dogs could not be excelled."

"Billy Andrews, the versatile clown connected with Thornton's Circus is a printer. Billy is a jolly good fellow and reflects credit on the show he travels with, which, by the way, was much better than was expected."

CHANGE OF DATE!

THORNTON'S BIG RAILROAD SHOW

GREAT BERLIN CIRCUS, MUSEUM AND MENAGERIE.

AT DU QUOIN, TUESDAY, JULY 20th, 1880.

By the time the show reached Emporia August 16, it was advertising its 7th annual tour. The *News* ran an uninformative handout on the 13th, but following the exhibition the paper provided no comment.

The Council Grove *Republican*, August 14, ran the following handout:

"The Railroad Show.

"In our advertising columns today will be found the mammoth announcement of the coming of the Big Railroad show, Thornton's Great Berlin Museum and Menagerie and St. Louis circus. This is the first appearance of this gigantic combination of cosmopolitan allied shows in our city. It is one of the oldest shows on the road, one which has played west and south for many years, and from the complimentary encomiums of the press, that honest representation of public sentiment, we judge that it is a first-class institution, and one which our play-going public will appreciate. During its season of recuperation many new attractions have been added to its already full corps of talented artists and list of living and natural curiosities."

A second handout published at Council Grove featured two sea lions: "These amphibious fish-animals are rather an expensive attraction, inasmuch as it requires enormous expense and difficulty to procure them, great care to preserve them in their miniature sea, and it requires large quantities of fresh game and fish daily to satisfy their appetities and stop their incessant roaring and barking. And another attraction in this department is a huge living crocodile, measuring twelve feet in length, and possesses strength enough to kill an ordinary ox with a single stroke from his ponderous tail, and which could easily swallow the largest man at one gulp. This large amphibious reptile is the only one of this species and proportion that has ever been on exhibition in this country.

The ad in the *Republican* featured "5 Great Clowns 5."

"Billy Andrews and Johnnie Lawton, the Happiest pair in the Saw Dust Business In Song and Shakesperian pleasantries.

"Chas. Bell' Sam McFlinn, and CHAS. CAVILLO the Phunny Phellows in their GROTESQUE, BROTHER AND SPECIALTY ACTS.

Thornton's Big Railroad Show Great Berlin Circus, Museum and Menagerie used this unusual newspaper advertisement in Du Quin, Illinois a few weeks before playing stands in Kansas in 1880. Pfening Archives.

"Remember Day and Date, Wednesday, August 18, 1880. Admission 50 cents. Children 25 cents."

On the 21st the *Republican* reported, "Billy Andrews, press agent of Thornton's Circus and Menagerie, called on us last Wednesday, while the show was here, and settled the contract for advertising. He is a showman of great popularity wherever known, and enjoys an extensive acquaintance throughout the West and South."

In reviewing the show, the *Republican* said, "Thornton's Circus and Menagerie, which exhibited here last Wednesday, was a creditable show, and possessed the rare merit of 'filling the bill,' by showing all it advertised. In the menagerie were some fine animals, especially the two sea lions and the sacred crocodile, which are rare specimens. The circus performance was better than the average and in some respects excelled anything ever exhibited here before. In acrobatic feats, the show has as fine a class of performersas one ever sees. The management is first class and the people with the show deport themselves so as to win the respect of all. It seemed entirely free from the low class of camp followers who usually infest a traveling circus. Mr. Thornton we found a perfect model as a manager and an agreeable and pleasant gentleman."

1. Much of the information on lighting is taken from *The Social History of Lighting,* William T. O'Dea, The Macmillen Company, New York, 1958.

2. A corruption of "DINOTHERIUM" which the Oxford English Dictionary describes as "a member of a genus of extinct proboscidean quadrupeds of great size, whose remains have been discovered in the miocene formations of Europe and Asia."

Research funded by grants from: Wolfe's Camera Shops, Inc., Topeka, Kansas and First National Bank of Kansas, Topeka.



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